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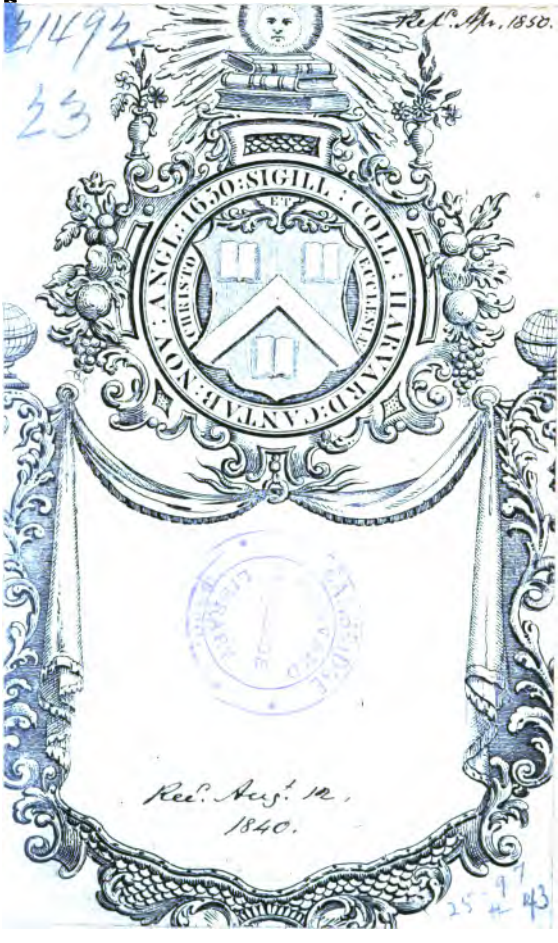

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MARY OF BURGUNDY;

OR,

THE REVOLT OF GHENT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"PHILIP AUGUSTUS," "HENRY MASTERTON," &c.

Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly
That thou wouldst holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win."—*Macbeth.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author of this work thinks it right to acknowledge, that, if there be any thing interesting in the following pages, he is but little entitled to claim it as his own, almost all the principal incidents being narrated in the works of George Chatelain, Jean Molinet, Philippe de Comines, and in the Chronicles of Flanders. Among these incidents he might cite the embassy of Olivier de Dain, the expedition of the Duke of Gueldres against Arras, the massacre of the magistrates of Ghent, and especially the death of the counsellors in the very presence of the princess,—some writers asserting that their blood absolutely sprinkled her garments.

Doubtless, the learned and judicious antiquary and critic may be inclined to point out, that the character of the hero of the revolt is a creation of the author's own imagination; and that we have no historical proof that he was actuated, or rather torn, by the contending passions which are here represented as continually struggling against each other in his bosom, and by turns conquering one another.

One fact, however, is certain,—that no human being now living can possibly have such means of knowing what were the real feelings of the individual alluded to, as the author of these volumes; and therefore he trusts that the public will take them upon his word.

It only remains further to be explained, that the magistracy of the city of Ghent formerly consisted of the grand bailli, aided by thirteen eschevins, three pensioners, and six secretaries; inferior to whom were the lieutenant bailli, thirteen eschevins, one pensioner, and four secretaries. Whenever the States General of the province assembled at Ghent, which was most frequently the case, the chief pensioner or the chief eschevin of the city, claimed, as a right, the presidency of the estates. Besides this body of magistrates, and the general assembly of the states, the provincial council of the sovereign generally held its seat in Ghent; at least, such was the case from the year 1463 to the year 1579. It most frequently consisted of five counsellors and a president, but the numbers changed from time to time; and during the early part of the reign of Mary its powers were almost null.

As the language of the court and the nobility in Flanders was at that time French, and all the principal authorities are alone to be found in that language, the writer of the following pages has preserved the names of offices, persons, and things as he found them, in that tongue, without seeking to inflict upon those who are kind enough to read his book, at all the necessity of studying a Flemish vocabulary for that purpose.

MARY OF BURGUNDY;

or,

THE REVOLT OF GHENT

CHAPTER I

It was on the evening of a beautiful day in the beginning of September, 1456,—one of those fair autumn days that wean us, as it were, from the passing summer, with the light as bright, and the sky as full of rays, as in the richest hours of June; and with nothing but a scarce perceptible shade of yellow in the woods to tell that it is not the proudest time of the year's prime. It was in the evening, I have said; but nothing yet betokened darkness. The sun had glided a considerable way on his descent down the bright arch of the western sky, yet without one ray being shadowed, without one beam being lost. He had reached that degree of declination alone at which his light, pouring from a spot a little above the horizon, produced, as it streamed over forest and hill, grand masses of light and shade, with every here and there a point of dazzling brightness, where the clear evening rays were reflected from stream or lake.

It was in the heart of a deep forest, too, whose immemorial trees, worn away by time, or felled by the axe, left in various places wide open spaces of broken ground and turf, brushwood and dingle—and amid whose deep recesses a thousand spots of picturesque beauty lay hidden from the eye of man. Those were not, indeed, times when taste and cultivation had taught the human race to appreciate fully all the charms and magnificence wherewith Nature's hand has robed the globe which we inhabit; and the only beings that then trod the deeper

glades of the forest were the woodman, the hunter, or those less fortunate persons who, as we see them represented by the wild pencil of Salvator Rosa, might greatly increase the picturesque beauty of the scenes they frequented; but, probably, did not particularly feel it themselves. But there is, nevertheless, in the heart of man, a native sense of beauty, a latent sympathy, a harmony with all that is lovely on the earth, which makes him unconsciously seek out spots of peculiar sweetness, not only for his daily dwelling, but also for both his temporary resting-place, and for the mansion of his long repose, whether the age or the country be rude or not.

Look at the common cemetery of a village, and you will generally find that it is pitched in the most picturesque spot to be found in the neighbourhood: if left to his free will, the peasant will almost always—without well knowing why—build his cottage where he may have something fair or bright before his eyes; and the very herd, while watching his cattle or his sheep, climbs up the face of the crag, to sit and gaze over the fair expanse of Nature's face.

It was in the heart of a deep forest, then, at the distance of nearly twenty miles from Louvain, that a boy, of about ten years of age, was seen sleeping by the side of a small stream; which, dashing over a high rock hard by, gathered its bright waters in a deep basin at the foot, and then rushed, clear and rapidly, through the green turf beyond. The old trees of the wood were scattered abroad from the stream, as if to let the little waterfall sparkle at its will in the sunshine. One young ash-tree alone, self-sown by the side of the river, waved over the boy's head, and cast a dancing veil of checkered light and shade upon features as fair as eye ever looked upon.

At about a hundred yards from the spot where he was lying, a sandy road wound through the savanna, and plunged into the deeper parts of the wood. On the other side, however, the ground being of a more open nature, it might be seen winding up the steep ascent of a high hill, with the banks, which occasionally flanked it to the east, surmounted by long lines of tall overhanging trees.

A little bridge of stone, whose ruinous condition told plainly how rarely the traveller's foot trod the path through the forest, spanned over the stream at a little

distance. And the evening light, as it poured in from the west, caught bright upon the countenance of the sleeping boy, upon the dancing cascade above his head, upon many a flashing turn in the stream, and, after gilding the ivy that mantled the old bridge, passed on to lose itself gradually in the gloom of the deep masses of forest-ground beyond.

The dress of the sleeper accorded well with the scene in which he was found; it consisted of a full coat, of forest-green, gathered round his waist by a broad belt, together with the long tight hose common at the period In his belt were a dagger and knife; but on his head he had no covering, except the glossy curls of his dark brown hair. And though the material of his garments was of the finest cloth which the looms of Ypres could produce, yet marks of toil, and even of strife, were apparent in the dusty and torn state of his habiliments.

He lay, however, in that calm, deep, placid sleep only known to youth, toil, and innocence. His breath was so light, and his slumber was so calm, that he might have seemed dead, but for the rosy hue of health that overspread his cheeks. No sound had any effect upon his ear, though, while he lay beside the stream, a wild, timid stag came rustling through the brushwood to drink of its waters, and suddenly seeing a human thing amid the solitude of the forest, bounded quickly away among the long glades of the wood. After that, the leaves waved over him, and the wind played with the curls of his hair for nearly half an hour, without any living creature approaching to disturb his repose. At the end of that time, some moving objects made their appearance at the most distant point of the road, where it sank over the hill. At first, all that could be seen was a body moving forward down the descent, enveloped in a cloud of dust; but gradually it separated into distinct parts, and assumed the form of a party of armed horsemen. Their number might be ten or twelve; and, by the slowness of their motions, it seemed that they had already travelled far. More than once, as they descended, they paused, and appeared to gaze over the country, as if either contemplating its beauty or doubtful of the road they ought to take. These pauses, however, always ended in their resuming their way towards the spot which we have described. When they at length reached it, they again drew the rein; and it became evident, that

uncertainty with regard to their farther progress had been the cause of their several halts upon the hill.

"By my faith, Sir Thibalt of Neufchatel," said one of the horsemen, who rode a little in advance of the others, "for Marshal of Burgundy, you know but little of your lord's dominions. By the Holy Virgin, methinks that you are much better acquainted with every high road and by-path of my poor appanage of Dauphiny. At least so the worthy burghers of Vienne were wont to assert, when we would fain have squeezed the double crowns out of their purses. It was then their invariable reply, that the Marshal of Burgundy had been upon them with his lances, and drained them as dry as hay—coming no one knew how, and going no one knew where."

The man who spoke was yet not only in his prime, but in the early part of that period of life which is called middle age. There was no peculiar beauty in his countenance, nor in his person; there was nothing either to strike or to please. Yet it was impossible to stand before him and not to feel one's self, without very well knowing why, in the presence of an extraordinary man. There was in his deportment to be traced the evident habit of command. He spoke as if knowing that his words were to be obeyed. But that was not all; from underneath the overhanging penthouse of his thick eyebrows shone forth two keen gray eyes, which had in them a prying, inquisitive cunning, which seemed anxiously exerted to discover at once the thoughts of those they gazed upon, before a veil could be drawn over motives or feelings, to conceal them from that searching glance.

Those given to physiognomy might have gathered, from his high and projecting but narrow forehead, the indications of a keen and observing mind with but little imagination, superstition without fancy, and talent without wit. The thin, compressed lips, the naturally firm-set posture of the teeth, the curling line from the nostril to the corner of the mouth, might have been construed to imply a heart naturally cruel, which derived not less pleasure from the wounds inflicted by bitter words than from producing mere corporeal pain. His dress, at this time of his life, was splendid to excess; and the horse on which he rode showed the high blood that poured through his veins, by a degree of fire and energy far superior to that exhibited by the chargers of his com-

panions, though the journey he had performed was the same which had so wearied them.

As he spoke the words before detailed, he looked back to a gentleman who rode a step or two behind him on his right-hand, and on his countenance appeared, what he intended to be a smile of frank, good-humoured raillery. The natural expression of his features mingled with it nevertheless, and gave it an air of sarcasm, which made the bitter, perhaps, preponderate over the sweet.

The person to whom he addressed himself, however, listened with respectful good-humour. "In truth, my lord," he replied, "so little have I dwelt in this part of the duke's dominions, that I know my way less than many a footboy. I once was acquainted with every rood of ground between Brussels and Tirlemont; but, God be thanked, my memory is short, and I have forgotten it all, as readily as I hope you, sir, may forget certain marches in Dauphiny, made when Louis the Dauphin was an enemy to Burgundy, instead of an honoured guest."

"They are forgot, lord-marshal, they are forgot," replied the dauphin, afterward famous as Louis XI., "and can never more be remembered but to show me how much more pleasant it is to have the lord of Neufchatel for a friend rather than an enemy. But, in heaven's name," he added, changing the subject quickly, "before we go farther, let us seek some one to show us the way, or let us halt our horses here, and wait for the fat citizens of Ghent that we left on the other side of the river."

His companion shook his head with a doubtful smile, as he replied, "It will be difficult, I trow, to find any guide here, without Saint Hubert, or some other of the good saints, were to send us a white stag with a collar of gold round his neck, to lead us safely home, as the old legends tell us they used to do of yore."

"The saints have heard your prayer, my lord," cried one of the party who had strayed a little to the left, but not so far as to be out of hearing the conversation which was passing between the other two; "the saints have heard your prayer, and here is the white stag, in the form of a fair boy in a green jerkin." As he spoke, he pointed forward with his hand towards the little cascade,

where the boy, who had been sleeping by its side, had now started up, awakened by the sound of voices, and of horses' feet, and was gazing on the travellers, with anxious eyes, and his hand resting on his dagger.

"Why, how now, boy?" cried the dauphin, spurring up towards the stream. "Thinkest thou that we are Jews, or cut-throats, or wild men of the woods, that thou clutchest thy knife so fearfully? Say, canst thou tell how far we are from Tirlemont?"

The boy eyed the party for several moments ere he replied. "How should I know whether you are cut-throats or not?" he said, at length: "I have seen cut-throats in as fine clothes. How far is it from Tirlemont? As far as it is from Liege or Namur."

"Then, by my troth, Sir Marshal," said the dauphin, turning to his companion, "our horses will never carry us thither this night. What is to be done?"

"What is the nearest town or village, boy?" demanded the Marshal of Burgundy. "If we be at equal distances from Namur and Liege and Tirlemont, we cannot be far from Hannut."

"Hannut is the nearest place," answered the boy; "but it is two hours' ride for a tired horse."

"We will try it, however," said the marshal; and then added, turning to the dauphin, "The lord of the castle of Hannut, sir, though first cousin of the bad Duke of Gueldres, is a noble gentleman as ever lived; and I can promise you a fair reception. Though once a famous soldier, he has long cast by the lance and casque; and, buried deep in studies, which churchmen say are hardly over-holy, he passes his whole time in solitude, except when some ancient friend breaks in upon his reveries. Such a liberty I may well take. Now, boy, tell us our road, and there is a silver piece for thy pains."

The boy stooped not to raise the money which the marshal threw him, but replied eagerly, "If any one will take me on the croup behind him, I will show you easily the way: nay, I beseech ye, noble lords, take me with you; for I am wearied and alone, and I must lie in the forest all night if ye refuse me."

"But dost thou know the way well, my fair boy?" demanded the dauphin, approaching nearer, and stooping over his saddle-bow to speak to the boy with an air of increasing kindness. "Thou art so young, methinks

thou scarce canst know all the turnings of a wood like this. Come, let us hear if thy knowledge is equal to the task of guiding us."

"That it is," answered the boy at once. "The road is as easy to find as a heron's nest in a bare tree. One has nothing to do but to follow on that road over the bridge: take the two first turnings to the right, and then the next to the left, and at the end of a league more the castle is before you."

"Ay," said the dauphin, "is it so easy as that? Then, by my faith, I think we can find it ourselves. Come, Sir Marshal, come!" and, so saying, he struck his spurs into his horse's sides, and cantered over the bridge.

The Marshal of Burgundy looked back with a lingering glance of compassion at the poor boy, thus unfeelingly treated by his companion. But, as the prince dashed forward and waved his hand for him to follow, he rode on also, though not without a muttered comment on the conduct of the other, which might not have given great pleasure had it been vented aloud. The whole train followed; and, left alone, the boy stood silent, gazing on them as they departed, with a flushed cheek and a curling lip. "Out upon the traitors!" he exclaimed, at length. "All men are knaves; yet it is but little honour to their knavery to cheat a boy like me."

The train wound onward into the wood, and the last horseman was soon hid from his eyes; but the merry sound of laughing voices, borne by the wind to his ear for some moments after they were out of sight, spoke painfully how little interest they took in his feelings or situation.

He listened till all was still; and then, seating himself on the bank of the stream, gazed vacantly on the bubbling waters as they rushed hurriedly by him, while the current of his own thoughts held as rapid and disturbed a course. As memory after memory of many a painful scene and sorrow, such as infancy has seldom known, came up before his sight, his eyes filled, the tears rolled rapidly over his cheeks, and, casting himself prostrate on the ground, he hid his face among the long grass, and sobbed as if his heart would have broken.

He had not lain there long, however, when a heavy hand, laid firmly on his shoulder, caused him once more to start up. And though the figure which stood by him

when he did so was not one whose aspect was very prepossessing, yet it would be difficult to describe the sudden lightning of joy that sparkled in his eyes through the tears with which they still overflowed. The person who had roused him from the prostrate despair in which he had cast himself down was a middle-sized, broad-made man, with long sinewy arms, and a chest like that of a mountain bull. He might be nearly forty years of age; and his face, which had once been fair,—a fact which was vouched alone by his light brown hair and clear blue eye,—had now reached a hue nearly approaching to the colour of mahogany, by constant exposure to the summer's sun and the winter's cold. There was in it, withal, an expression of daring hardihood, softened and, as it were, purified by a frank, free, good-humoured smile, which was not without a touch of droll humour. His garb at once bespoke him one of those vagrant sons of Mars with whom war in some shape was a never-failing trade—a class of which we must speak more hereafter, and which the abuses of the feudal system, the constant feuds of chieftain with chieftain, and the long and desolating warfare between France and England had at that time rendered but too common in every part of Europe. He was not, indeed, clothed from head to heel in cold iron, as was customary with the knight or man-at-arms when ready for the field; but there was quite a sufficient portion of old steel about his person, in the form of arms both offensive and defensive, to show that hard blows were the principal merchandise in which he traded.

He laid his large hairy hand, as I have said, firmly and familiarly on the boy's shoulder; and the expression of the young wanderer's countenance, as he started up and beheld who it was that stood near him, at once showed, not only that they were old acquaintances, but that their meeting was both unexpected and joyful.

"Matthew Gournay!" exclaimed the boy, "good Matthew Gournay, is it you indeed? Oh, why did you not come before? With your fifty good lances we might yet have held the castle out till we were joined by the troops from Utrecht; but now all is lost—the castle taken, and my father—"

"I know it all, Master Hugh," interrupted the soldier—"I know it all better than the paternoster. Bad news flies faster than a swallow; so I know it all, and a good

deal more than you yourself know. You ask why I did not come, too; by our Lady, for the simplest reason in the world—because I could not. I was lying like an old rat in a trap, with four stone walls all round about me, in the good city of Liege. Duke Philip heard of the haste I was making to give you help, and cogged with the old bishop—may his scull be broken!—to send out a couple of hundred *reiters* to intercept us on our march. What would you have? We fought like devils, but we were taken at a disadvantage by a superior force. All my gallant fellows were killed or dispersed; and at last, finding my back against a rock, with six spears at my breast, and not loving the look of such a kind of toasting-fork, I agreed to take lodging in the town-prison of Liege."

"But how got you out then?" demanded the boy; "did they free you for good-will?"

"Not they," replied Matthew Gournay: "they gave me cold water and hard bread, and vowed every day to stick my head upon the gate of the town, *as a terror to all marauders*, as they called me. But the fools showed themselves rank burghers, by leaving me my arms; and I soon found means to get the iron bars out of the windows, ventured a leap of thirty feet, swam the ditch, climbed the wall, and here I am in the forest of Hannut—but not alone, Master Hugh; I have got a part of my old comrades together already, and hope soon to have a better band than ever. The old seneschal too, from the castle, is with us, and from him we heard all the bad news. But, though he talked of murder, and putting to death, and flaying alive, and vowed that everybody in the castle had been killed but himself, I got an inkling from the old charcoal-burner's wife, at the hut in the wood, of how you had escaped, and whither you had gone. So, thinking, as you were on foot and alone, that you might want help and a horse, I tracked you like a deer to this place: for your father was always a good friend to me in the time of need; and I will stand by you, Master Hugh, while I have a hand for my sword, or a sword for my hand."

"Hark!" cried the boy, almost as the other spoke; "there's a bugle on the hill; it must be the duke's butchers following me."

"A bugle!" cried the soldier; "a cow's horn blown by a sow-driver, you mean. None of the duke's bugles

ever blew a blast like that—something between the groaning of a blacksmith's bellows and the grunting of a hog. But there they are," he continued, "sure enough, lances and all, as I live. We must to cover, Hugh, we must to cover! Quick—thy hand, boy—they are coming down straggling like fallow-deer."

So saying, Matthew Gournay sprang up the high bank, in falling over which the little stream formed the cascade we have noticed; and as he climbed the rock himself, he assisted, or rather dragged up after him, his young companion, whose hand he held locked in his own, with a grasp which no slight weight could have unbent. For a moment they paused on the top of the crag to take another look at the approaching party, and then plunged among the long shrubs and tangled brushwood that clothed the sides of the winding glen down which the stream wandered previous to its fall.

CHAPTER II.

The party whose approach had interrupted the conversation of Matthew Gournay with his young companion were not long before they reached the little open spot in the forest from which they had scared the other two; and, as it was at that point that their road first fell in with the stream, they paused for a moment to water their horses ere they proceeded. Their appearance and demeanour corresponded well with the peculiar sound of the horn which they had blown upon the hill; for though the instrument which announced their approach was martial in itself, yet the sounds which they produced from it were any thing but military; and though swords and lances, casques and breastplates were to be seen in profusion among them, there was scarcely one of the party who had not a certain burgher-rotundity of figure, or negligence of gait, far more in harmony with furred gowns and caps *à la mortier* than with war-steeds and glittering arms.

The first who paused beside the stream had nearly been thrown over his horse's head by the animal suddenly bending his neck to drink; and it was long before

the rider could sufficiently compose himself again in the saddle to proceed with some tale which he had been telling to one of his companions, who urged him to make an end of his story with an eagerness which seemed to show that the matter was one of great interest to him at least.

"Well-a-day, Master Nicholas, well-a-day!" cried the discomposed horseman; "let me but settle myself on my stool—saddle, I mean: God forgive me! but this cursed beast has pulled the bridle out of my hands. So-ho! Bernard, so-ho!—there, there; surely thou couldst drink without bending thy head so low." While he thus spoke, by a slow and cautious movement, not unlike that with which a child approaches a sparrow to perform the difficult manœuvre of throwing salt upon its tail, he regained a grasp of the bridle-rein, which the horse had twitched out of his hand, and then went on with his story,—interrupting it, however, every now and then, to address sundry admonitions to his horse, somewhat in the following style:—

"Well, where was I, worthy Master Nicholas?—I was saying—so-ho! beast, I say; the devil's in thee, thou wilt have me into the river.—I was saying that after the castle was taken, and every soul put to the sword, even the poor boy Hugh,—for which last, I hear, the duke is very much grieved,—be quiet, Bernard, hold up thy head!—Count Adolphus himself fled away by a postern-door, and is now a prisoner in—"

"Nay, but, Master Martin, you said they were all put to death," interrupted one of his companions.

"Remember what the doctors say," replied the other; "namely, that there is no general rule without its exception. They were all killed but those that ran away, which were only Count Adolphus and his horse, who got away together, the one upon the other. Fool that he was, to trust himself upon a horse's back! It was his ruin,—alack! it was his ruin."

"How so?" demanded Master Nicholas; "did the horse throw him and break his pate? Methought you said, but now, that he was alive and a prisoner."

"And I said truly, too," answered the other. "Nevertheless, his mounting that horse was the cause of his ruin; for though he got off quietly enough, yet, at the bridge below Namur, where, if he had had no horse, he would have passed free, he was obliged to stop to pay

pontage* for his beast. A priest, who was talking with the toll-man, knew him; and he was taken on the spot, and cast into prison."

"Methinks it was more the priest's fault than the horse's, then," replied Master Nicholas; "but whoever it was betrayed him, bad was the turn they did to the city of Ghent; for, what with his aid, and that of the good folks of Gueldres, and the worthy burghers of Utrecht, we might have held the proud duke at bay, and wrung our rights from him drop by drop, like water from a sponge."

"God knows, God knows!" replied Martin Fruse, the burgher of Ghent, to whom this was addressed; "God knows! it is a fine thing to have one's rights, surely; but, somehow, I thought we were very comfortable and happy in the good old city before there was any quarrel about rights at all. Well I know, we have never been happy since; and I have been forced to ride on horseback by the week together; for which sin my flesh and skin do daily penance, as the chirurgeons of Namur could vouch if they would. Nevertheless, one must be patriotic, and all that, so I would not grumble,—if this beast would but give over drinking, which I think he will not do before he or I drop down dead. Here, horse-boy, come and pluck his nose out of the pool; for I cannot move him more than I could the town-house."

The worthy burgher was soon relieved from his embarrassments; and his horse being once more put upon the road, he led the way onward, followed by the rest of the party, with their servants and attendants. The place of leader was evidently conceded to good Martin Fruse; but this distinction was probably assigned to him more on account of his wealth and integrity than from the possession of any fine wit, great sense, energetic activity, or other requisite for a popular leader. He was, in truth, a worthy, honest man, somewhat easily persuaded; especially where his general vanity, and, more particularly, his own opinion of his powers as a politician, were brought into play: but his mind was neither vigorous nor acute; though sometimes an innate

* Philip de Comines, who relates this anecdote much in the same terms as those used by good Martin Fruse in the text, places it, however, several years later; though from the time that Adolphus Duke of Gueldres, here called Count Adolphus, was kept in prison by the Duke of Burgundy, it would seem that the time of his capture was here correctly stated.

sense of rectitude, and hatred of injustice, would lend energy to his actions, and eloquence to his words.

Among those who followed him, however, were two or three spirits of a higher order; who, without his purity of motives, or kindly disposition, possessed far greater talents, activity, and vigour. Nevertheless, turbulent by disposition and by habit, few of the burghers of Ghent, at that time, possessed any very grand and general views, either for asserting the liberties and rights of their country, or for pursuing any plan of personal ambition. They contented themselves with occasional tumults, or with temporary alliances with any of the states and cities of the Low Countries; few of which rested long without being in open rebellion against their governors.

One of the party, however, which accompanied good Martin Fruse, must not pass unmentioned; for, though at that time acting no prominent part, he exerted considerable influence, in after days, on the fortunes of his country. He was, at the period I speak of, a bold, brave, high-spirited boy; by no means unlike the one we have seen sleeping by the cascade, though perhaps two or three years older. He was strong and well proportioned for his age, and rode a wild young Spanish jennet; which, though full of fire, he managed with perfect ease. There was something, indeed, in the manner in which he excited the horse into fury, gave it the rein, and let it dash wildly past all his companions, as if it had become perfectly ungovernable; and then, without difficulty, reined it up with a smile of triumph,—which gave no bad picture of a mind conscious of powers of command, ambitious of their exercise, and fearless of the result. How this character of mind became afterward modified by circumstances will be shown more fully in the following pages.

In the mean while we must proceed with the train of burghers as they rode on through the wood; concerting various plans among themselves for concealing from the Duke of Burgundy the extent of their intrigues with Adolphus of Gueldres, and with the revolted citizens of Utrecht, for excusing themselves on those points which had reached his knowledge, and for assuaging his anger by presents and submission. The first thing to be done before presenting themselves at his court was, of course, to strip themselves of the warlike habiliments in which

they had flaunted, while entertaining hopes of a successful revolt. For this purpose, they proposed to avoid the high road either to Brussels or Louvain; and as most of them were well acquainted with the country through which they had to pass, they turned to the left, after having proceeded about a mile farther on their way, and put spurs to their horses in order to get out of the forest before nightfall, which was now fast approaching.

The way was difficult, however, and full of large ruts and stones; in some places overgrown with briers, in others interrupted by deep ravines. Here, it would go down so deep a descent, that slowness of progression was absolutely necessary to the safety of their necks; there, it would climb so steep a hill, that whip and spur were applied to their beasts in vain.

As they thus journeyed on, making but little way, the bright rosy hue which tinged the clouds above their heads showed that the sun was sinking beneath the horizon's edge: the red, after growing deeper and deeper for some time, began to fade away into the gray; each moment the light became fainter and more faint, and, at length, while they had yet at least three miles of forest ground to traverse, night fell completely over the earth.

The darkness, however, was not so deep as in any degree to prevent them from finding their way onward, or from distinguishing the objects round about them; although it lent a mysterious sort of grandeur to the deep masses and long dim glades of the forest, made the rocks look like towers and castles, and converted many a tree, to the eyes of the more timid, into the form of an armed man.

After having gone on in this state for about half an hour,—just a sufficient time, indeed, to work up every sort of apprehension to the utmost, yet not long enough to familiarize the travellers with the darkness,—just when every one was calling to mind all the thousand stories which were, in those days, alas! too true ones, of robbers, and murderers, and free plunderers,—the whole party plunged down into a deep dell, the aspect of which was not at all calculated to assuage their terrors, whether reasonable or foolish. Not, indeed, that it was more gloomy than the road through which they had been lately travelling; rather, on the contrary, whatever degree of light yet remained in the heavens

found its way more readily into that valley—where the trees were less high, and at greater intervals from each other—than into the narrow road which had led them thither, the high banks of which were lined all the way along with tall and overhanging beeches. The sort of dingle, however, which they now entered was clothed with low but thick shrubs; and no means of egress whatever appeared, except by climbing some of the steep ascents which surrounded it on every side. There was a small piece of level ground at the bottom, of about a hundred yards in diameter, and the moment they had reached the flat, the word "Halt!" pronounced in a loud and imperative voice, caused every one suddenly to draw his bridle-rein with somewhat timid obedience, though no one distinguished who was the speaker.

The matter was not left long in doubt. A dark figure glided from the brushwood across their path, half a dozen more followed; and the glistening of the faint light upon various pieces of polished iron showed that there was no lack of arms to compel obedience to the peremptory order they had received to halt.

As the persons who obstructed the way, however, seemed but few in number, one of the more bellicose of the burghers called upon his companions to resist. His magnanimity was suddenly diminished by a long arm stretched from the bushes beside him, which applied the stroke of a quarter-staff with full force to his shoulders; and though a cuirass, by which his person was defended, protected him from any serious injury, yet he was thrown forward upon his horse's neck, with a sound very much resembling that produced by the falling of an empty kettle from the hands of a slovenly cook. All were now of one opinion, that it was useless to contend with such invisible enemies also, especially as those that *were* visible were gradually increasing in numbers; and worthy Martin Fruse led the way to a valorous surrender, by begging the gentlemen of the forest "to spare them for God's sake."

"Down from your horses, every one of you," cried the rough voice which had commanded them to halt; "and we shall soon see what stuff you are made of."

The citizens hastened to obey; and, in the terror which now reigned completely among them, strange were the attitudes which they assumed, and strange was the tumbling off, on either side of their beasts, as they

hurried to show prompt submission to the imperious command they had received.

In the confusion and disarray thus produced, only one person of all their party seemed to retain full command of his senses, and he was no other than the boy we have before described, who, now taking advantage of a vacancy he saw in the ranks of their opponents, dashed forward for a gap in the wood, and had nearly effected his escape. He was too late, however, by a single moment: his bridle was caught by a strong arm before he could force his way through; and his light jennet, thrown suddenly upon its haunches, slipped on the green turf, and rolled with her young master on the ground.

"By my faith," said the man who had thus circumvented him, "thou art a bold young springal, but thou must back with me, my boy;" and so saying, he raised him, not unkindly, from the earth, and led him to the place where his companions stood.

The burghers and their attendants—in all about ten in number—were now divested of their arms, offensive and defensive, by the nameless kind of gentry into whose hands they had fallen. This unpleasant ceremony, however, was performed without harshness; and though no resistance of any kind was offered, their captors abstained, with very miraculous forbearance, from examining the contents of their pouches, and from searching for any other metal than cold iron. When all this was completed, and the good citizens of Ghent reduced to their hose and jerkins, stood passive, in silent expectation of what was to come next,—not at all unlike a flock of sheep that a shepherd's dog has driven up into a corner of a field,—the same hoarse-voiced gentleman, who had hitherto acted as the leader of their assailants, addressed them in a bantering tone:

"Now, my masters, tell me truly," he cried, "whether do ye covet to go with your hands and feet at liberty, or to have your wrists tied with cords till the blood starts out from underneath your nails, and your ankles garnished in the same fashion?"

The answer of the citizens may well be conceived; and the other went on in the same jeering manner:—"Well, then, swear to me by all you hold holy and dear—but stay!—First tell me who and what ye are, that I may frame the oath; for each man in this world holds holy and dear that which his neighbour holds foolish and cheap."

"We are poor unhappy burghers of Ghent," replied Martin Fruse, who, though at first he had been terrified to a very undignified degree, now began to recover a certain portion of composure,—"we are poor unhappy burghers of Ghent, who have been seduced by vain hopes of some small profit to ourselves and our good city, to get upon horseback. Alack! and a-well-a-day! that ever honest, sober-minded men should be persuaded to trust their legs across such galloping, uncertain, treacherous beasts."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the man who had addressed him; "as I live by sword and dagger, it is good Martin Fruse coming from Namur. Well, Martin, the oath I shall put to thee is this,—that by all thy hopes of golden florins, by all thy reverence for silks and furs, and cloths of extra fineness, by thy gratitude to the shuttle and the loom, and by thy respect and love for a fine fleece of English wool, thou wilt not attempt to escape from my hands, till I fix thy ransom and give thee leave to go."

Martin Fruse very readily took the oath prescribed, grateful in his heart for any mitigation of his fears, though trembling somewhat at the name of ransom, which augured ill for the glittering heaps which he had left at home. His comrades all followed his example, on an oath of the same kind being exacted from each; but when it was addressed to the youth who accompanied them, a different scene was acted. He replied boldly, "Of cloths and furs I know nothing, but that they cover me, and I will not take such a warehouse vow for the best man that ever drew a sword."

"How now, how now, Sir Princox!" cried Martin Fruse; "art thou not my nephew, Albert Maurice? Take the oath this gentleman offers thee, sirrah, and be well content that he does not strike off thy young foolish head."

"I will swear by my honour, uncle," replied the boy; "but I will never swear by cloth and florins, for such a vow would bind me but little."

"Well, well, thy honour will do," said the leader of their captors; "though, by my faith, I think we must keep thee with us, and make a soldier of thee, for doubtless thou art unworthy of the high honour of becoming a burgher of Ghent."

The sneering tone in which this was spoken ex-

pressed not ill the general feeling of contempt with which the soldiers of that day looked upon any of the milder occupations of life. Whatever kindness they showed towards the citizen—which was at times considerable—proceeded solely from sensations approaching compassion. They looked upon the burgher, indeed, as a sort of inferior animal, whose helplessness gave it some claim upon their generosity; and such was probably the feeling that prompted the mild and indulgent manner in which the body of roving adventurers who had captured the Gandois travellers, marshalled their prisoners in rank, and led them away from the high road—where, though improbable, such a thing as an interruption might accidentally take place—to the deeper parts of the forest, where silence and solitude seemed to reign supreme.

This part of the arrangement, however, was not at all to the taste of good Martin Fruse: and though he certainly did not venture any opposition, yet, while led along, together with his companions, by fifteen or sixteen armed and lawless men, it was with fear and trembling that he rolled his eyes around upon the dark and dreary masses of wood,—the long profound glades, in which nothing was to be distinguished,—and on the wild and broken rocks, which every now and then burst through their covering of trees and shrubs, and, towering up into the sky, caught upon their brows the first rays of the rising moon, invisible to those who wandered through the forest at their foot.

The scene was altogether a great deal too sublime and picturesque for his taste; and he could not help thinking, as he walked unwillingly along, how admirably fitted was the place into which he was led for committing murder, without fear or discovery. Then would he picture to his own mind, his body left exposed beneath the greenwood trees, to be preyed on by the ravens, and beaten by the wintry showers; and his heart would melt with tender compassion for himself, when he thought how all his good gossips of Ghent would, in years to come, tell the lamentable story of worthy Martin Fruse, and how he was murdered in the forest of Hannut, to the wondering ears of a chance guest, over a sea-coal fire, in the midst of the cold winter.

He had nearly wept at the pitiful images he had called

up of his own fate, in his own mind; but, before he reached that point, a distant neighing met his ear. The horses on which he and his companions had ridden, and which were led after them by their captors, caught the sound also, and answered in the same sort; and in a few minutes after a bright light began to gleam through the wood, which proved, on their farther advance, to proceed from a watch-fire, by the side of which a bird of the same feather with those who had captured them was lying asleep. He started up, however, on their approach; and by the congratulations which passed mutually between him and his comrades, it became evident to Martin Fruse that a party of citizens of Ghent was a rich prize in the eyes of the freemen of the forest. It is true that he would rather have had his worth appreciated in a different manner; but the sight of the fire cheered his heart, and a sumpter-horse, which the good burghers had brought with them, being led forward and relieved of its burden, the various stores of provision with which it was loaded were spread out upon the grass, and called up more genial ideas in the mind of the citizen than those which had accompanied him on his way through the forest. The pleasures of this new subject of contemplation, indeed, were for a few minutes disturbed, by the apprehension that the captors would proceed to divide the spoil of the panniers, without assigning any part to the original proprietors. But this source of uneasiness was soon removed; and, on being made to sit down by the fire, and invited frankly and freely to partake of all the good things once his own, the heart of Martin Fruse expanded with joy; the character of robber acquired a dignity and elevation in his eyes which it had never before possessed; and deriving from fat cold capon and excellent wine both present satisfaction and anticipations of future good treatment, he gave himself up to joy, and began to gaze round upon the faces of his new comrades with every inclination to be pleased.

CHAPTER III.

Leaving the worthy burgher and his companions in the forest, we must change the scene for awhile, and bring the reader into the interior of one of the feudal mansions of the period. The room into which we intend to introduce him was small in size; and being placed in a high square tower, attached to the castle of Hannut, it took the exact form of the building, except inasmuch as a portion was taken off the western side, for the purpose of admitting a staircase, on which, indeed, no great space was thrown away. The furniture of the room was small in quantity, and consisted of a few large chairs of dark black oak,—whose upright backs of almost gigantic height were carved in a thousand quaint devices,—together with two or three settles or stools, without any backs at all, a silver lamp—hanging by a thick brass chain from the centre of a roof, formed into the shape of a tent, by the meeting of a number of grooved arches—and a small black cabinet, or closet, one of the doors of which stood open, displaying within, in splendid bindings of crimson velvet, what might in that day have been considered a most precious library, comprising about forty tomes of manuscript. Besides being decorated by these articles of furniture, the room was adorned by fine hangings of old tapestry; but the principal object in the whole chamber was a table and reading-desk, of some dark-coloured wood, on which was displayed, wide open, the broad vellum leaves of a richly illuminated manuscript. The table and its burden were placed exactly beneath the silver lamp already mentioned, which threw a strong but flickering light upon the pages of the book, and a chair which stood near seemed to show that somebody had recently been reading.

The person who had been so employed, however, had by this time ceased; and having risen from his chair, was standing beside an open casement, pierced through the thick walls at such a height from the floor as just

to enable him to lean his arm upon the sill of the window, and gaze out upon the scene beyond.

Through this open casement, at the time I speak of, the bright stars of a clear autumn night were twinkling like diamonds in the unclouded sky, and the sweet, warm westerly wind, breathing of peace and harvest from the plains beyond, sighed over the tops of the tall forest trees, and poured into the window just raised above them. The person who gazed over the wide expanse commanded by the tower, was a tall, strong man, of perhaps a little more than forty years of age, with a forehead somewhat bald, and hair which had once been black, but which was now mingled thickly with gray; while his beard, which was short and neatly trimmed, had become almost white. His complexion was of a pale, clear brown, without a tinge of red in any part except his lips; and, as he gazed out upon the sky, there was a still calm spread over every feature, which, together with the bloodless hue of his skin, would have made his countenance look like that of the dead, had not the light of his large dark eye told of a bright and living soul within. We must take leave to look for a moment into his bosom as he stood in his lonely study, gazing forth upon the sky.

"And are those clear orbs," he thought, as with his glance fixed upon the heavens he saw star after star shine forth,—"and are those bright orbs really the mystic prophets of our future fate? Is yon the book on which the Almighty hand has written in characters of light the foreseen history of the world he has created? It may be so: nay, probably it is; and yet how little do we know of this earth that we inhabit, and of yon deep blue vault that circles us around. The peasant, when he hears of my lonely studies, endues my mind, in his rude fancy, with power over the invisible world, and all the troops of spirits that possibly throng the very air we breathe; and kings and princes themselves send to seek knowledge and advice from my lips, while I could answer to peasant and to king, that all my powers do not suffice to lay the spirit of past happiness from rising before my eyes, and all my knowledge does not reach to find that sovereign elixir—consolation for the fate of man. All that I have learned teaches me but to know that I have learned nothing; to feel that science, and philosophy, and wis-

dom are in vain; and that, hidden mysteriously within the bosom of this mortal clay, is some fine essence, some distinct being, which, while it participates in the pleasures and affections of the earthly thing in which it lies concealed, thirsts for knowledge beyond the knowledge of this world, and yearns for joys more pure, and loves more imperishable, than the loves and joys of this earth can ever be. Oh, thou dear spirit, that in the years long past I have seen look forth upon me from the dear eyes of her long gone; surely if ever the immortal being came back to visit the earth on which it once moved, thou wouldst not have left me so long to solitude.—No, no," he added aloud, "it is all a dream!

"And yet," he thought, after a pause, "the powers with which the vulgar mind invests me, are all in vain: they give me at least corporeal peace, repose from all the turbulent follies—the wild whirling no-things, which man calls pleasure, or business, or policy—more empty, more unimportant, in relation to the grand universe, than the dancing of the myriad motes in the sunshine of a summer's day. They give me peace—repose. I am no longer called upon, with an ash staff, or bar of sharpened iron, to smite the breast of my fellow-men, in some mad prince's quarrel. I am no longer called upon to take counsel with a crowd of gray-beard fools, in order to steal a few roods of dull heavy soil from the dominions of some neighbouring king. No, no; the very superstitious dread in which they hold me gives me peace; ay, and even power—that phantom folly of which they are all so fond, and be it far from me to undeceive them."

Thus thought the Lord of Hannut, and, like most men, in some degree cheated himself in regard to his own motives. Doubtless the predominating feelings of his heart were such as he believed them to be. But, besides those motives on which he suffered his mind to rest, there mingled with the causes of his conduct small portions of those more ordinary desires and passions which minds of a very elevated tone are anxious to conceal even from themselves. Learned beyond any one, perhaps, of his age and country, the Lord of Hannut was not a little proud of his knowledge; but when we remember the darkness of the times in which he lived, we shall not wonder that such learning tended but little

to enlighten his mind upon those deep and mysterious subjects which the height of human knowledge has but discovered to be beyond its ken. Judicial astrology, in that day, was held as a science, of the accuracy of which ignorance alone could be permitted to doubt; and the belief that a superhuman agency was continually at work in the general affairs of this world was not only a point of faith with the vulgar, but a point admitted by many of the most scientific. Magic and necromancy were looked upon as sciences. In vain Friar Bacon had written an elaborate treatise to prove their nullity: he himself was cited as an instance of their existence; and many of the most learned were only deterred from following them openly by the fear of those consequences which rendered their private pursuit more interesting from the danger that accompanied it. Although magic, proper[illegible]alled, formed no part of his studies, the reputation thereof was not disagreeable to the Lord of Hannut; and it was not alone the desire of obtaining peace and repose which rendered the awe not unpleasing, wherewith both the peasantry of the neighbourhood and his fellow-nobles throughout the land regarded him, but, mingled imperceptibly with the current of other feelings, gratified vanity had its share also. Nor, indeed, though he affected to despise the world and the world's power, did the influence that he exercised upon that world displease him. Perhaps, too, that influence might be the more gratifying, because it was of an uncommon kind; and though, doubtless, true philosophy, and a just estimate of the emptiness of this earth's pleasures and desires, might have some share in the distant solitude which he maintained, the pride of superior knowledge had a portion in the contempt with which he looked upon the generality of beings like himself. Much true benevolence of heart and susceptibility of feeling, with a considerable degree of imaginative enthusiasm, were, in fact, the principal features of his character; but his reasoning powers also were strong and clear, and very superior to those of most men in the age in which he lived; and, as we sometimes see, these various qualities of his mind and heart rather contended against than balanced each other.

In his early youth, the enthusiasm and the susceptibility had ruled almost alone. The din of arms, the tumult of conflicting hosts, the pomp and pageant of the

listed field, all had charms for him. The strength of his frame, together with the skill and dexterity given by early education, had made many of the best knights in Europe go down before his lance, and had obtained for him that degree of glory and applause which might have kept him for ever one of the rude but gallant champions of the day. But then came love,—love of that deep, powerful, engrossing nature which a heart such as his was alone capable of feeling. The cup of happiness was given to his lip but for a moment; he was suffered to drink one deep, short, draught; and, when he had tasted all its sweetness, it was dashed from his hand, never to be filled again. From that moment his life had passed in solitude, and his days and nights had been occupied by study: nor had he above once for more than twelve years passed the limits of that forest, over which his eyes were now cast.

As he leaned upon the window, and gazed out upon the sky, pondering over the strange mystery of man's being, and the lot which fate had cast him, the last faint lingering rays of twilight were withdrawn from the air, and night fell upon one half of the world; but it was one of those bright, clear, splendid nights which often come in the beginning of autumn, as if the heavens loved to look, with all their thousand eyes, upon the rich harvest and the glowing fruit. After he had gazed for some time, the edge of the sky began to grow lighter, and the clear yellow moon, waxing near her full, rose up, and poured a tide of golden light over the immense extent of green leaves and waving boughs spread out beneath his eyes. All was still, and solemn, and silent, and full of calm splendour and tranquil brightness. There was not a motion, there was not a sound, except the slow gliding of the beautiful planet up the arch of heaven, and the whispering of the light wind, as it breathed through the boughs of the trees.

Suddenly, however, a dull faint noise was heard at some distance; which went on increasing slowly, till the sound of horses' feet could be distinguished, broken occasionally by the tones of a human voice, speaking a few words of order or inquiry. The Lord of Hannut listened, and when the horsemen came nearer, he gathered from an occasional sentence, spoken as they wound round the foot of the tower in which he was standing, that the party were directing their course to

the gates of his own dwelling. His brow became slightly clouded; and though hospitality was a duty at that time never neglected, yet so rarely was he visited by strangers, and so little did he court society, that he paused somewhat anxiously, to think how he might best receive them. To throw the gates of a castle open to all comers was not indeed at all safe in those days; and though the Lord of Hannut was, at that time, at feud with no one, and though his personal character, the strength of his castle, and the number of his retainers secured him against the free companions and plunderers of the times, it was not, of course, without pause and examination that any large body of men were to be admitted within the gates at such an hour of the night. He remained, however, musing somewhat abstractedly, till the horsemen, whom he had heard below, had wound along the road, which, following the various sinuosities of the walls and defences of the castle, skirted the brow of the hill on which it stood, and was only interrupted by the gate of the barbacan on the northern side of the building.

Before it the travellers paused, and the sound of a horn, winded long and clearly, gave notice to the denizens of the castle that admittance was demanded by some one without. Still the master of the mansion remained in thought, leaving to the prudence and discretion of his seneschal the task of receiving and answering the travellers; and the sound of a falling drawbridge, with the creaking of its beams, and the clanging and clash of its rusty chains, followed by the clatter of horses' feet in the court-yard, soon announced that a considerable number of cavaliers had been admitted within the outer walls. Many voices speaking were next heard, and then, after a pause of comparative silence, a slow step echoed up the long hollow staircase, which led to the chamber we have already described. At that sound the Lord of Hannut withdrew from the window, and seating himself before the book in which he had been lately reading, fixed his eyes upon the door. There might be a slight touch of stage effect in it,—but no matter,—what is there on this earth without its quackery?

Scarcely had he done so, when some one knocked without, and, on being desired to come in, presented, at the half-opened door the weather-beaten face of an old

soldier, who acted the part of seneschal, bearing a look of apprehension, which sat ill upon features that seemed originally destined to express any thing but fear.

"Come in, Roger, come in!" cried the Lord of Hannut. "Art thou fool enough, too, to think that I deal with evil spirits?"

"God forbid, my lord!" replied the man. "But ill should I like to see a spirit of any kind, good or evil; and therefore I always like to have the room clear before I intrude."

"Well, what would you now?" demanded his lord, with somewhat of impatience on his brow. "Wherefore do you disturb me?"

"So please you, sir," replied the seneschal, "a noble traveller, just alighted in the court below, with a small but gallant train, consisting of—"

"On with thy tale, good Roger!" interrupted his master. "What of the traveller? Leave his train to speak for themselves hereafter."

"So please you, my lord," continued the other, "he bade me tell you that an old tried friend, Thibalt of Neufchatel, craved your hospitality for a single night."

"Thibalt of Neufchatel!" exclaimed the other, his face brightening for a moment with a transitory expression of pleasure, and then turning deadly pale, as the magic of memory, by the spell of that single name, called up the scenes of the painful past, with which that name was connected. "Thibalt of Neufchatel! an old tried friend indeed! though sad was the day of our last meeting. Where is he? Lead the way!"

Thus saying, the Lord of Hannut, without waiting for the guidance of his seneschal, proceeded, with a rapid step, towards the great hall of the castle, concluding, as was really the case, that into that place of general reception the travellers had been shown on their arrival. It was an immense gloomy apartment, paved with stone, occupying the whole interior space at the bottom of the chief tower. At one end was the great door, which opened at once into the court; and at the other was a high pointed window, not unlike that of a cathedral. Arms of every kind then in use decorated the walls in profusion. On the right side of the hall, as you entered from the court, was the wide open hearth, with stools and benches round about; and so wide and cool was the chamber, that at the time I speak of,—though a night in

the early part of September,—an immense pile of blazing logs sparkled and hissed in the midst, casting a red and flickering light around, which, catching on many a lance, and shield, and suit of armour on the opposite wall, lost itself in the gloom at either end of the hall, and in the deep hollow of the vault above.

A cresset,—hung by a chain from the roof,—added a degree of light, which, however, was confined to the part of the hall in the immediate vicinity of its source; and within its influence, disencumbering themselves from some of the habiliments of the road, were seated the party of travellers just arrived at the moment that the Lord of Hannut entered. He came in by a small door behind one of the massy pillars which supported the vault, and advanced at once towards his guests. The sound of his footstep caused them all to rise, but the Marshal of Burgundy immediately advanced before the rest to meet his friend. When within a few steps of each other, both paused and gazed with a countenance of doubt and surprise on the face of the other. Each had forgot that many years had passed since they last met, and each had pictured to himself the image of his friend as he had before seen him, in the pride of youth and health; but, when the reality was presented to them, both paused in astonishment to gaze upon the effects of Time's tremendous power which they mutually presented to each other. Nor was their surprise at first unmingled with some degree of doubt as to the identity of the person before them, and of the friend from whom they had so long been separated.

"Good God!" exclaimed the Lord of Hannut, "Thibalt of Neufchatel!"

"Even so, Maurice de Hannut!" replied the marshal. "Good faith, old friend, I scarcely should have known thee. But more of this hereafter," he added hastily. "See, here is a noble prince, the Lord Louis of Valois, who demands thy care and hospitality for this night, as under my safe-conduct he journeys to visit his noble cousin, our lord the Duke of Burgundy."

The Lord of Hannut bowed low at this intimation of the high quality of one of his guests, and proceeded to welcome the son of the reigning monarch of France, with that grave and stately dignity which the early habits of the court and camp had given to his demeanour. The forms and ceremonies of that day, which would be found

dull enough even to practise at present, would appear still duller in writing than they would be in act; and therefore, passing over all the etiquette which was observed in the reception and entertainment of the dauphin, the supper that was laid before him, and the spiced wines that were offered him at his bedside, we will continue for a moment in the great hall, which, after he retired to rest, remained occupied by the few attendants who had accompanied him and the Marshal of Burgundy thither, and by the usual servants and officers of the Lord of Hannut.

The presence of their superiors had restrained all free communication between these worthy personages; but between the squire of the body to the Marshal of Burgundy and the seneschal of the Lord of Hannut had passed many a glance of recognition, and a friendly, though silent, pinch of the arm during supper; and no sooner was Louis of Valois safely housed in his chamber, and his companion, the Lord of Neufchatel, closeted with the master of the mansion, than a conversation commenced between two of the followers, a part of which must be here put down as illustrative of those past events which, in some degree, however slight, affect the course of this true history.

"What, Roger de Lorens!" cried the squire of the marshal, "still hanging to the skirts of thy old lord! Do I find thee here at the end of twelve long years!"

"And where could I be better, Regnault of Gand?" replied the other. "But thou thyself, old friend, art thou not at the same skirts too as when last I saw thee? How is it that after such long service thou art not yet a knight?"

"Why, in good faith, then," replied the squire, "it is that I am too poor to do honour to knighthood, and too wise to covet a state that I have not the means to hold. I have made money in the wars on an occasion, too, like my neighbours; but, alack, friend Roger, no sooner does the right hand put the money in than the left hand filches it out again. And is it, then, really twelve long years since we met? Lord, Lord! it looks but yesterday when I think of those times; and yet, when I count up all the things I have done since, and make old Memory notch them down on her tally, it seems like the score of a hundred years, more than twelve. I remember the last day we ever saw each other: do you?"

"Do you think I could ever forgetit?" said the other. "Was it not that day when the pleasure-house of Lindenmar was burned to the ground, and our good lord's infant was burned in the flames?"

"I remember it well," replied the other, musing over the circumstances of the past; "and I remember that my lord and Adolph of Gueldres, and all the rest of the nobles that were marching to join the duke, saw the flames from the road; and all came willingly to help your gallant young lord. He was gallant and young then. But Adolph of Gueldres cried to let them all burn, so that the lands of Hannut might come to him. He said it laughing indeed; but it was a bitter jest at such a minute."

"My lord heard of that soon enough," answered the seneschal; "and he never forgave it."

"Oh, but we heeded him not," exclaimed the other: "we all gave what aid we could. Mind you not how my lord rushed in and brought out your lady in his arms, and how she wept for her child? It was but a fortnight old, they say!"

"No more, no more!" answered the other: "and I will tell you more; she never ceased to weep till death dried up her tears—poor thing!—But, hark thee, Regnault," he added, taking the other by the arm, and drawing him a few paces aside, not only out of earshot of the rest of the persons who tenanted the hall, but also out of the broad glare of the lamp, as if what he was about to say were not matter for the open light: "but, hark thee, Regnault de Gand! they do say that the spirits of that lady and her child visit our lord each night in his chamber at a certain hour."

"Didst thou ever see them, good Roger?" demanded his companion, with a smile of self-satisfied incredulity. "Didst thou ever set eyes upon them thyself?"

"God forbid!" ejaculated the seneschal, fervently; "God forbid!—I would not see them for all the gold of Egypt."

"Well then, good Roger, fear not," replied Regnault de Gand; "thou shalt never see them! I have heard a mighty deal of spirits, and ghosts, and apparitions, and devils; but, though I have served in the countries where they are most plenty, I never could meet with one in the whole course of my life; and, between us two, good Roger, I believe in none of them, except, indeed, all that

the church believes, and the fourteen thousand virgin martyrs."

"Why, that is believing enough, in all conscience," replied Roger de Lorens; "but if you believe in no such things, I will put thee to sleep in the small room at the stairs' foot, just beneath my lord's private chamber."

Whether this proposal was relished much or little by the worthy squire, he had made too open a profession of his incredulity to shrink from the test; and he was fain to take up his abode for the night in a low-roofed, but not inconvenient, chamber at the foot of the staircase in the square tower. He looked somewhat pale as his old companion bade him good night; but he looked a vast deal paler the next day, when they wished each other good morning. Not one word, however, did he say, either of objection at first, or of comment at last; and no one ever exactly knew how he sped during the night he passed in that chamber, though, when some months after he married a buxom dame of Ghent, a report got about among the gossips, that, though he had not actually encountered a spirit, he had heard many strange noises, and seen many a strange beam of light wandering about the apartment, coming he knew not whence, and disappearing he knew not whither.

He himself told nothing openly; and when the fair dame whom he had taken to his bosom, and who was supposed to be deeply learned in all the secrets thereof, was spoken to on the subject, she too affected a tone of mystery, only assuring the ingenious gossip who tried to ferret out the details, with a solemn shake of the head, "that those might disbelieve the apparition of spirits who liked. As for her husband, Regnault, he had good cause to know better; though he had once been a scoffer, like all the rest of your swaggering, gallant, dare-devil men-at-arms."

Having now violated, in some degree, the venerable art of chronology, and, in favour of the worthy squire, run somewhat forward before the events of my tale, I must beg the reader to pause on his advance for a single instant; and, while the dauphin, the marshal, and their respective trains sleep sound in the massy walls of the castle of Hannut, to return to the party we lately left assembled round a fire in the heart of the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

From the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth centuries, and even, perhaps, to a much later period, there existed, spread over the whole continent—equally in France, in Flanders, in Italy, and in Germany—a particular class of men, whose livelihood was obtained by the sword, and by the sword alone. In time of hostility they were soldiers; in time of peace they were plunderers; and, long habituated to reap alone the iron harvest of war, they never dreamed of turning the sword into the reaping-hook—a sort of proceeding which they would have considered the basest degradation of an instrument which they held in as high a degree of veneration as that in which it was regarded by the ancient Scythians.

In the interior of France, indeed, such a thing as peace was sometimes to be found; but in Germany, and its frontiers towards France, there existed such a number of great vassals and independent princes, each of whom had the right of waging war against his neighbour—a right which they took care should not fall into desuetude—that the mercenary soldiers who at that time infested the world were rarely, for any long period, under the necessity of cultivating the arts of peace, in their own peculiar manner, in the heart of the green forest.

During the earlier part of the great struggle between France and England, these men had assembled in bodies of thousands and tens of thousands; and, during the existence of any of the temporary suspensions of hostilities, which took place from time to time, they seized upon some town or castle, lived at free quarters in the country, and laid prince and peasant, city and village alike under contribution. Gradually, however, these great bodies became scattered; kings found it more imperatively necessary to overcome such internal foes than to oppose an external enemy. The nobles also leagued together to destroy any of the great bands that remained; but the smaller ones, tolerated at first as a

minor evil, consequent upon the system of warfare of the day, were always in the end encouraged, protected, and rewarded, when hostilities between any two powers rendered their services needful to each; and were not very severely treated when circumstances compelled them to exercise their military talents on their own account. Scarcely a great lord through Germany, or Burgundy, or Flanders had not a band of this kind—more or less formidable, according to his wealth and power—either in his pay, or under his protection. The character of the adventurers, indeed, of each particular troop, greatly depended upon the disposition and manners of the lord to whom they were for the time attached: but, upon the whole, they were a very much libelled people; and though in actual warfare they were certainly worse than the ordinary feudal soldiers of the day, in time of peace they were infinitely better than the common robber, which succeeded upon their extinction. There were times, indeed, when, under the guidance of some fierce and ruthless leader, they committed acts which disgraced the history of human nature; but upon ordinary occasions, though they carried into the camp a strong touch of the plundering propensities of the freebooters, yet, when war was over, they bore with them to the cavern or the wood many of the frank and gallant qualities of the chivalrous soldier.

It was in the hands of a body of such men, though of somewhat a better quality than usual, that we last left Martin Fruse, the worthy burgher of Ghent, beginning to recover from the apprehensions which he had at first entertained, and to enjoy himself in proportion to the rapid transition he had undergone, from a feeling of terror to a sense of security. The balance of human sensation is so nicely suspended, that scarcely is the weight removed from our heart, when up flies the beam, as far above as it was below, and long does it vibrate before it attains the equipoise. Such, I believe, are the feelings of every human breast: though some, ashamed of the sudden transition, have power enough to master its expression, and clothe themselves with external calmness, while their hearts are really as much agitated as those of other men. Not so, however, with good Martin Fruse: though, occasionally, in affairs of policy, he thought himself called upon to make a bungling attempt to give an air of diplomatic secrecy and caution to his

language and manner: and though, when prompted by others, he could speak an equivocal speech, and would fancy himself a skilful negotiator upon the faith of a doubtful sentence, yet, in general, the feelings of his heart would bubble up to the surface unrestrained. On the present occasion, as cold capon and rich ham, strong Rhenish and fruity Moselle gave pledges of the most satisfactory kind for his future safety, his joy sparkled forth with somewhat childish glee; and his good friends the robbers, in the midst of the green forest, supplied in his affections the place of many a boon companion of the rich town of Ghent.

The stores of the sumpter-horse were soon nearly consumed, but it was remarked by the worthy burgher, that a portion which, by nice computation, he judged might satisfy the appetite of two hungry citizens, together with a couple of large flasks of the best wine, were set apart with reverential care, as if for some person who was not present, but who was held by his companions in a high degree of respect. After governing his curiosity for some time, that most unrestrainable of all human passions got the better of him, and, by some sidelong questions, he endeavoured to ascertain for whom this reservation was made.

"Oh no! no, no!" replied the personage who had hitherto acted as the leader of the freebooters, "we must not touch that, it is put by for our captain, who will be here presently, and will tell us," he added, with a malicious grin, as he played upon the apprehensions of the good citizen,—"and will tell us what we are to do with thee and thine, good Master Martin Fruse: thou art not the first syndic of the weavers, I trow, who has dangled from a beam, and one could not choose a more airy place to hang in, on a summer's day."

Though Martin Fruse perceived that there was a touch of jest at the bottom of his companion's speech, yet the very thought of dangling from a beam,—a fate which the Duke of Burgundy was fully as likely to inflict upon a rebellious subject, as the most ferocious freebooter upon a wandering traveller,—caused a peculiar chilly sensation to pucker up his whole skin: but, as his danger from the robbers was the more pressing and immediate of the two, he applied himself strenuously to demonstrate that it was both unjust and unreasonable to

hang a man either to beam or bough, after having abetted him in making himself very comfortable in the world in which God had placed him. There was something in the arguments he deduced from capon and hock, together with the terror that he evidently felt, and a degree of childish simplicity of manner, which made the freebooters roar with laughter; and they were just indulging in one of these merry peals, when a sudden rustle in the bank above their head gave notice that some one was approaching.

"Hold by the roots, boy," cried a rough voice above. "Here, set your foot here,—now jump,—as far as you can—that's right! Cleared it, by St. George!—now slip down. So here we are."

As he spoke the last words, Matthew Gournay, followed by young Hugh of Gueldres, stood within one pace of the spot where the freebooters had been regaling. Two or three of the latter had started up to welcome him, holding high one of the torches, to light his descent; and as he came forward, his eye ran over the evidences of their supper, and the party who had partaken of it, with some degree of surprise.

"How now, my merry men?" he cried, laughing. "Ye have had some sport, it would seem; but, by our Lady, I hope ye have left me a share, and something for this poor lad, who is dying of hunger."

"Plenty, plenty for both," replied many of the voices; "that is to say, enough for one meal at least; the next we must find elsewhere."

"But here are some Gandois traders," added one of the party, "waiting your awful decree, and trembling in every limb lest they should be hanged upon the next tree."

"God forbid!" replied Matthew Gournay. "We will put them to light ransoms, for rich citizens. Who is the first? Stand up, good man.—What! Martin Fruse!" he exclaimed, starting back, as the light fell upon the face of the burgher. "My old friend Martin Fruse, in whose house I lodged when I came to teach the men of Ghent how to get up a tumult: little did I think I should so soon have thee under contribution."

"Nay, nay, good Master Gournay," replied the burgher, "right glad am I to see thee. In truth, I thought I had fallen into worse hands than thine. I know well enough,"

he added, with a somewhat doubting glance,—"I know well enough that thou hast no heart to take a ransom from thine old companion."

"Faith, but thou art wrong, Martin," replied Matthew Gournay, laying his heavy hand upon the citizen's shoulder. "Thine own ransom shall be light, and that of thy comrades also, for thy sake; but something we must have, if it be but to keep up good customs. A trifle, a mere trifle, a benevolence, as our good kings call it in England, when they take it into their heads to put the clergy to ransom."

"Nay, but," said Martin Fruse, whose confidence and courage were fully restored by the sight of his friend's face,—"nay, but consider that I was taken while journeying for the sole purpose of conferring with thee and Adolph of Gueldres concerning the general rising we purposed."

"Well, well, we will speak further hereafter," answered Matthew Gournay. "That job is all over for the present; and as, doubtless, the duke has heard of our doings, it may go hard with your purses, and with my neck, if he catch me, which, please God, he shall not do. But we must think of some way of getting ye all back to Ghent in safety. Now, Halbert of the hillside," he added, addressing one of his old band, who was probably an Englishman like himself, "hie thee to the midway oak: thou shalt there find the old seneschal. Tell him all is safe! Bid him tarry there till to-morrow, collecting all our friends that come thither; and, in the mean time, to send me the leathern bottles from the hollow tree. These flimsy flasks furnish scarce a draught for a boy; and, good faith, I will be merry to-night, whatever befall to-morrow. Up the bank, up the bank," he continued; "'tis but a quarter of a mile that way."

While the messenger was gone in search of the fresh supply of wine which the leathern bottles implied, Matthew Gournay and the young companion he had brought with him despatched the provisions which had been saved by the very miraculous abstinence of the freebooters; and at the same time the two flasks of Rhenish disappeared with a celerity truly astonishing. Four capacious bottles, holding about a gallon each, were soon after added to the supply, and all present were called upon to partake.

A scene of merriment and joy then succeeded, which it would be impossible to describe—such, indeed, as perhaps no men ever indulged in whose lives were not held by so uncertain a tenure,—whose moments of security were not counterbalanced by so many hours of danger, and whose pleasures were not bought by so many labours and pains, that it became their only policy to quaff the bowl of joy to the very dregs, while it was yet at their lips, lest, at the first pause, circumstance, that unkind stepdame, should snatch it angrily from their hands for ever. The final explosion of their merriment was called forth by good Martin Fruse, who, after showing many signs and symptoms of weary drowsiness, declared that he should like to go to bed, and asked, with much simplicity, where he was to sleep.

"Sleep!" exclaimed Matthew Gournay, "sleep! why where the fiend would you sleep?"

"I mean, where's your house, good Master Matthew Gournay?" rejoined Martin Fruse, with open eyes, from which all expression was banished by surprise at finding his question a matter of laughter, he knew not why. "It's all very well to sup in the wood in a fine summer night; but it's growing late and cold, and I do think we had better a great deal get us to our warm beds."

The only answer which he received to this speech, from the robbers, was a new peal of laughter; but at the same moment his nephew plucked him by the sleeve, exclaiming, "Hist, uncle! ye only make the knaves grin; you may sleep where you are, or not sleep at all for this night. Have you not heard how these men covet no covering but the green boughs of the forest?"

"Thou art somewhat malapert, young sir," said Matthew Gournay, fixing upon him a glance into which various parts of the boy's speech, not very respectful to the freebooters, had called up a degree of fierceness that was not the general expression of his countenance; "thou art somewhat malapert; and, if thy uncle follow my advice, he will make thy shoulders now and then taste of the cloth-yard measure, else thou wilt mar his fortune some fine day. The boy says true, however, good Martin; here sleepest thou this night, if thou sleepest at all; so get thee under yonder bank, with that broad oak-tree above thy head, to guard thee from the westerly wind, and thank Heaven thou hast so fair a canopy. There, wrap thy cloak about thee; ask God's

blessing, and sleep sound. To-morrow I will wake thee early, to talk of what may best be done to speed thee on thy way in safety, for many of the duke's bands are about; and without we can get thee some good escort, thou art like to be in the same plight as the ass, who, running away from a dog, fell in with a lion."

Although Martin Fruse believed himself to be as wise as any man that ever lived, except King Solomon, he had a peculiar dislike, or rather, it may be called, a nervous antipathy, to the very name of an ass; but, when it was introduced, as on the present occasion, in the form of a simile, to exemplify his own situation, his feelings were wounded in a deep degree. In silent indignation, therefore, for he knew not what to reply, he arose, and proceeded to the spot pointed out, where, having made himself as comfortable as circumstances permitted him to do, he lay down, and, notwithstanding a firm determination not to close an eye, he was soon pouring forth a body of nasal music, which seemed intended to shame the nightingales for their silence in the autumn season.

The rest of the travellers took up with such couches as they could find; and the robbers, too, one by one, wrapped their cloaks about them, and resigned themselves to sleep. The two last who remained awake were Matthew Gournay and young Hugh of Gueldres, whose sleep by the cascade in the morning had sufficiently removed the weariness of his limbs to leave his mind free to rest upon the sorrows of the past and the dangers of the present.

With him the leader of the freebooters held a long and, to them, an interesting conversation; in the course of which the boy narrated all the events which had lately occurred to him,—the storming of his father's castle by the troops of Burgundy; the perils he had undergone; the difficulties of his escape; his desolation and despair when he found himself a wanderer and an outcast; his long and weary journey; his adventure with the dauphin, whom he described as a French traveller; and the manner in which that base and artful prince had deceived him. He told it all with so much simple pathos, that he called up something very like a tear in the adventurer's clear blue eye; and, laying his broad hand affectionately on his head, he said, "Never mind, my young lord, never mind; you are not without friends, and never shall be, so long as Matthew Gournay lives: for I swear

by the blessed Virgin, and all the saints to boot, that my sword shall fight your quarrels, and my lance shall be at your command, till I see you a righted man. But, as you say that the Lord of Hannut is your cousin in the first degree: thither we must go for help and counsel. I know him well, too; for my good band helped to keep his castle for him when the black riders were about last year: and what with the troops of spirits that folks say he can command, and the company of the good fellows that I shall soon gather together again, we shall be able to do something for you, no doubt. By-the-way," he added, seeming suddenly to bethink himself of some fact that had before escaped his attention, "these travellers, you say, are gone to Hannut too, and under their escort these Gandois weavers may pass unsuspected on their way homeward."

"What if they refuse to take them?" said Hugh of Gueldres.

"By the Lord, they shall eat more cold iron than they can well stomach," replied the adventurer: "but I must sleep, my young lord, I must sleep, if I would rise fresh to-morrow! Lend us thy hand to shift off this plastron." So saying, he disencumbered himself of his breastplate, and the other pieces of defensive armour which might have rendered his sleep uncomfortable; and, laying them down by his steel cap or basinet, which he had previously taken off, he wrapped the end of his mantle round his head, stretched himself on the ground, grasped the hilt of his dagger tight with his right hand; and, in that attitude, soon fell into as sound a sleep as if he had never tasted crime or heard of danger. The boy soon followed his example, and all was silence.

About an hour before daylight the following morning, Martin Fruse was awakened by some one shaking him by the shoulder. He roused himself with many a yawn, rose up, stretched his round limbs, which were sadly stiffened by a night's sleep upon the cold ground; and, in gazing round, found, by the dim light of the expiring fire, and of one or two pine-wood torches stuck in the ground, that the party of adventurers had been considerably increased during his sleep; and that they were now all busily employed in saddling horses and preparing for a march, except Matthew Gournay himself, whose grasp it was that had awakened him. He was now informed, in a few brief words, without any precise

explanation, that a means had suggested itself for sending him and his companions forward towards Ghent, with less danger than that to which they would be exposed in travelling alone. For this courtesy, and for the permission to return at all, Matthew Gournay exacted, under the name of ransom, a sum so much smaller than the fears of the worthy burgher had anticipated, that he only affected to haggle for a florin or two less, in order to keep up the custom of bargaining, so necessary to him in his mercantile capacity. A hint, however, from Matthew Gournay, that, if he said another word, the sum demanded should be tripled, soon set the matter at rest; and in a few minutes the whole party were on horseback, and on their way to the castle of Hannut.

On their arrival at the grate of the barbacan, they were instantly challenged by a sentry, who at that early hour stood watching the first gray streaks of the dawn. After various inquiries and messages to and from the interior of the castle, they were led round to a small postern, and, being made to dismount, were led, one by one, by torchlight, up one of those narrow interminable stairs still to be found in every old building whose erection can be traced to the feudal period.

CHAPTER V.

It was after dinner on the following morning,—which meal, be it remarked, took place in those days about ten o'clock,—that the dauphin and the Marshal of Burgundy rose to bid adieu to their noble host, and offered him, in courteous terms, their thanks for the hospitable entertainment he had shown them.

"I have, my lord, a favour to ask in return," said the Lord of Hannut, "which will leave me your debtor. It is simply this: some worthy merchants of Ghent, travelling on mercantile affairs, as I am told, arrived here this morning, and, being fearful of encountering some of the robbers, which have given to this forest not the best repute, are now waiting in the inner court, anxious to join themselves to your train, and accompany you as

far as Cortenbergh, where they will leave you, and take the short cut to Ghent."

"Willingly, willingly," replied the dauphin: "by my faith, if there be robbers in the wood, the more men we are the better."

The Marshal of Burgundy looked somewhat grave. "I have heard some rumours, my lord," he said, "that the men of Ghent, who, in my young day, when I frequented this part of the country, were as turbulent a race of base mechanics as ever drove a shuttle or worked a loom, have not forgotten their old habits, and from day to day give my lord the duke some fresh anxiety."

"Nay, nay," replied the Lord of Hannut; "these men are rich burghers, returning peacefully to their own city from some profitable excursion."

"Oh, let us have them, by all means!" exclaimed Louis, who possibly might have his own views, even at that time, in cultivating a good understanding with the people of Ghent. At least, we know that he never ceased to keep up some correspondence with the burghers of the manufacturing towns of Flanders, from the time of his exile among them to the last hour of his life. "Oh! let us have them, by all means. Think of the robbers, my lord-marshal! By my faith! I have too few florins in my purse to lose any willingly!"

The Marshal of Burgundy signified his assent by a low inclination of the head; though it was evident from his whole manner that he was not at all pleased with the new companions thus joined to his band, and would at once have rejected the proposal, had good manners towards his host or etiquette towards the dauphin permitted him to make any further opposition.

"So necessary do I think caution against the freebooters, my lords," said their host, as he conducted them towards the court-yard, where their horses stood saddled, "that I have ordered ten spears of my own to accompany you to the verge of the forest. They will join you at the little town of Hannut, about half a mile distant, and will remain with you as long as you may think it necessary."

Louis returned his thanks in courtly terms; and the Lord of Neufchatel thanked his old friend more frankly; but said he should like to see the boldest freebooter that ever was born stand before the Marshal of Burgundy, though he had but four lances and four horseboys

in his train. They were by this time in the court yard; and Louis greeted the burghers, whom he found waiting, with a familiar cordiality well calculated to win their hearts without diminishing his own dignity. The Marshal of Burgundy, on the contrary, spoke not; but looked on them with a grim and somewhat contemptuous smile, muttering between his teeth, with all the haughtiness of a feudal noble of that day, "The rascallion communes! they are dressed as proudly as lords of the first degree!"

Notwithstanding his offensive pride, the Lord of Neufchatel was far from treating the burghers with any real unkindness; and, after the whole party had mounted and left the castle of Hannut, he gratified himself every now and then by a sneer, it is true; but whenever any occasion presented itself for contributing to their comfort, or rendering them a substantial service, the natural courtesy of a chivalrous heart got the better of the prejudices of education. Nevertheless, his pride offended more than his services pleased; and when, after a quiet and uninterrupted journey, the two parties separated at Cortenbergh, though the marshal left them as a set of men on whom he should never waste another thought, they remembered him long as one of those proud tyrants whose insults and oppression often goaded the people into tumults, though the time was not yet come for a successful struggle for emancipation.

From Cortenbergh the dauphin and his companions rode on towards Brussels, sending forward a messenger to inform the Duke of Burgundy of their approach; but before they reached the gates of the town they received information that the prince whom they sought was even then in the field against the people of Utrecht. Nevertheless, as a safe asylum in Brussels was all that Louis demanded, he rode on upon his way; and, being admitted at once within the walls of the town, proceeded towards the palace. His coming had been notified to the Duchess Isabelle; and on arriving at the barriers, which at that time separated the dwelling of every prince or great noble from the common streets of the town, he found that princess, together with the young and beautiful Countess of Charolois—the wife of him afterward famous as Charles the Bold—waiting to do honour to the heir of the French throne. No sooner did he perceive them than, springing from his horse, he advanced with

courtly grace, and gallantly saluted the cheek of every one of the fair bevy who had descended to welcome him; and then, offering his arm to the duchess, wished to lead her into the palace. But this method of proceeding was not at all permitted by the mistress of the most ceremonious court at that time in Europe; and a series of formal courtesies began and endured for a mortal half-hour, such as would have slain any queen in modern Europe. At length the resistance of the duchess was vanquished by the dauphin taking her by the hand, and thus leading her forward as he exclaimed, "Nay, nay, lady, you are over-ceremonious towards one who is now the poorest gentleman of all the realm of France, and knows not where to find a refuge, except with you and my fair uncle of Burgundy."

We might now pursue Louis XI. through all his cunning intrigues at the court of Burgundy: for, though then a young man, with the ardent blood of youth mingling strangely in his veins with the cold serpent-like sanies of policy, yet his nature was the same artful nature then that it appeared in after-years; and treachery and artifice were as familiar to his mind while combined with the passions and follies of early life, as they were when connected with the superstitions and weaknesses of his age.

At present, however, it is neither with Louis, nor with the Duke of Burgundy, nor with his warlike son, that we have principally to do, but rather with the young Countess of Charolois, then in that interesting situation when the hopes of a husband and a nation are fixed upon a coming event, which, with danger to the mother, is to give an heir to the throne and to the love of both sovereign and people.

The subjects of Burgundy watched anxiously, till at length, in the month of February, on St. Valentine's eve, was born Mary of Burgundy,—the only child that ever blessed the bed of Charles the Bold. The baptism was appointed to take place as soon as possible; and the dauphin was invited to hold at the font the infant princess whose after-being his ambition was destined to render miserable. Now, however, all was joy and festivity; and magnificent presents and splendid preparations evinced how much the Flemish citizens shared, or would have seemed to share, in the happiness of their duke and his family. Even the people of Utrecht, so

lately in rebellion, vied with Bruges and Brussels, Ghent and Ypres, in offering rich testimonies of their gladness; and Brussels itself was one scene of gorgeous splendour during the whole day of the christening. The centre of the great street, from the palace to the church of Coburg, was enclosed within railings breast-high; and, towards night, four hundred of the citizens, holding lighted torches of pure wax in their hands, were stationed along the line. A hundred servants of the house of Burgundy, furnished also with torches, lined the aisles of the church, and a hundred more were soon seen issuing from the palace gates, followed by as splendid a cortège as the world ever beheld. The Duchess of Burgundy herself, supported by the dauphin, carried her son's child to the font; and all the nobles of that brilliant court followed on foot to the church.

It is not necessary here to describe the pompous ceremonies of that day, as they are written at full in the very elaborate account given by Eleonore of Poitiers. Suffice it to say, such joy and profusion never before reigned in Brussels. The streets of the city flowed with wine and blazed with bonfires. Every rich citizen gathered round his glowing hearth all the friends and relations of his house. Comfits and spiced hippocras fumed in every dwelling; and the christening of Mary of Burgundy became an epoch of rejoicing in the memory of men.

One event of that night, however, must be noticed. The fate of the city of Ghent, whose project of revolt had, in spite of all precaution, become known to the Duke Philip, had been left in the hands of the Count of Charolois, that prince's son; and a deputation from what were then called the three members of Ghent—that is to say,* from the burghers and nobles, from the united trades, and from the incorporation of weavers—were even then in Brussels, for the purpose of imploring mercy and forgiveness. The young count, whose hasty and passionate nature was prone to be irritated by any thing that hurried or excited him, had been in such a state of fretful impatience during the preparations for

* Although almost all the superficial books of modern date which refer to the ancient state of Ghent speak of these three members or states as the ecclesiastics, the nobles, and the commons, the statement in the text is correct; which may be ascertained by referring to the Chronicles of George Chatellain, ad ann. 1467.

the baptism of his child, that his wiser counsellors, who wished much that he should deal clemently with the Gandois, had concealed their arrival, in hopes of a more favourable moment presenting itself.

They were not, indeed, deceived in this expectation; and, after the ceremony was over, and all the splendour he could have wished had been displayed, without cloud or spot, on the christening of his child, the heart of the count seemed to expand, and he gave himself up entirely to the joy of the occasion. His friends and attendants determined to seize the moment while this favourable mood continued. After the infant had been carried back from the church and presented to its mother, and after the cup and the drageoir had been handed with formal ceremony to each of the guests, the Lord of Ravestein called the prince's attention to a petition he held from his father's humble vassals, the citizens of Ghent; and seeing that he received the paper with a smile, he added the information that the deputies were even then waiting anxiously without, in what was termed the *chambre de parement*. The count's brow instantly became clouded; but, without answering, he beckoned Ravestein and several others to follow him out of the countess's chamber, in which this conversation had taken place, and at once entered the apartment in which the burghers were assembled. There was something in the stern haste of his stride, as he advanced into the room, which boded little good to the supplicants; and his brow gave any thing but a favourable presage.

The deputation consisted of about twenty persons, chosen from all ranks; and among them were two or three who had followed to the presence of the prince from motives of curiosity, and a desire, for once, to see the splendours of a royal court, though the reception of the whole party was not likely to be very gratifying. Among the principal personages of the deputation appeared our good friend Martin Fruse, who had brought with him his nephew, Albert Maurice; and the other persons whom we have seen with him in the forest of Hannut bore him company also on the present occasion. Though the burghers of Ghent were sufficiently accustomed to harangue each other, either in the town-house or the market-place, and had a good conceit of their own powers of oratory, yet fear, which, of all the affections of the human mind, is the greatest promoter of

humility, had so completely lessened their confidence in their own gift of eloquence, that, instead of intrusting the supplications they were about to make to one of their own body, they had hired a professional advocate from a different town to plead their cause before their offended prince.

"Range out, messires, range out!" were the first ungracious words of the Count de Charolois. "Range out, and let me see the lovely faces of the men who would fain have excited our father's subjects to revolt."

By his orders the deputies from Ghent were arranged in a semicircle before him, and, according to etiquette, the whole party dropped upon one knee; though some went farther, and bent both to the ground. In the mean time their advocate pronounced a long, florid, and frothy harangue, after the manner of that day; and calling David, Solomon, and many others, both sacred and profane, to his aid, as examples of clemency, besought the count to show mercy to the repentant citizens of Ghent.

The heir of Burgundy appeared to give little attention to the studied and unnatural oration of the advocate, but continued rolling his eyes over the countenances of the supplicants, with a bent brow, and a smile which—as a smile always proceeds from some pleasurable emotion—could only arise from the gratification of pride and revenge, at the state of abasement to which he saw the revolted Gandois reduced.

When the orator had concluded, the count replied,—"Men of Ghent, I have heard that in all time ye have been turbulent, discontented, factious, like a snarling cur that snaps at the hand that feeds it, but crouches beneath the lash: think not that you shall escape without due punishment; for know, that it is as much the duty of a prince to punish the criminal as to protect the innocent."

He paused, and no one ventured to reply, except the boy Albert Maurice, who, grasping the hilt of the small dagger, which persons of almost all ages or ranks then wore, muttered, in a tone not quite inaudible, the words "Insolent tyrant."

Whether these words caught the ear of any one else or not, they were, at all events, loud enough to reach that of the Count de Charolois; and, taking one stride

forward, he struck the youth a blow, with the palm of his open hand, which laid him almost senseless on the ground.

A momentary confusion now ensued; the nobles and attendants interposed, to prevent any further act of unprincely violence. The boy was hurried away out of the room; several of the deputies made their escape, fearing the immediate consequence; and the Count of Ravestein endeavoured to persuade his cousin, Charles of Burgundy, to quit the apartment, terrified lest he should proceed to measures which would throw the Gandois into open rebellion.

He was mistaken, however; the rage of the prince had evaporated in the blow he had struck; and, somewhat ashamed of the act of passion he had committed, he endeavoured to make it seem, both to himself and to those around him, not the effect of hasty wrath,—which it really was,—but the deliberate punishment of an insolent boy.

To Ravestein's remonstrances and entreaties for him to leave the apartment, he replied by a loud laugh, demanding, "Thinkest thou I could be moved to serious anger by a malapert lad like that? He spoke like a spoiled boy, and I have given him the chastisement suited to a spoiled boy: with these men of Ghent I shall deal as towards men."

He was about to proceed, and was resuming the stern air with which he had formerly addressed the deputies, when the dauphin, stepping forward, spoke to him in a low tone, as if to prevent his intercession from being apparent, though his gesture and manner were quite sufficient to show the burghers that he was pleading in their behalf. The Count of Charolois had not yet learned all the intricate duplicity of Louis's character, and took it for granted that, while he interceded for the people of Ghent, he did really—as he affected to do—desire that they should be ignorant of his generous efforts in their favour.

"Well, be it so, my princely cousin," he replied, smoothing his ruffled brow; "the godfather of my child shall not be refused his first request to me, upon the very day of her baptism; but, by my faith! the honour of this good act shall rest where it is due,—with you, not with me. Know, men of Ghent, that you have a better advocate here than this man of many

words, whom you have brought to plead your cause. My noble cousin, Louis of France, condescends to intercede for you, and ye shall be pardoned upon the payment of a moderate fine. But, remember! offend not again; for, by the Lord that lives! if ye do, I will hang ten of each of your estates over the gates of the city. What have ye there?" he added suddenly, pointing to some large objects, wrapped in violet-coloured linen, and carried by two or three stout attendants, who had followed the men of Ghent to the prince's presence; "what have ye there?"

"An humble offering, my Lord the Count," replied Martin Fruse, rising from his knees, and walking towards the object which had attracted the attention of the Count de Charolois; "an humble offering from the city of Ghent to our noble Count, upon the birth of his fair daughter; though that foolish advocate forgot to mention all about it in his speech."

"Well for ye that he did so!" replied the count; "for had he attempted to bribe me to forget justice, I doubt much whether one of the deputies of Ghent would have quitted these palace walls alive."

"But only look at them, my Lord the Count," replied Martin Fruse, whose all-engrossing admiration of the rich presents they had brought made him insensible to the stern tone in which the count had been speaking. "Only look at them; they are so beautiful;" and so saying, he removed the linen which covered them, and exposed to view three large and richly chased vases of massive silver. And certainly their effect upon all present very well justified the commendations which he had bestowed upon their beauty, and his censure of the advocate for not mentioning them before.

Both Charles of Burgundy and the dauphin took an involuntary step forward, to look at them more nearly. But the eyes of Louis, who was fonder of the examination of the human heart than of the finest piece of workmanship ever produced by the hands of man, were soon turned to the face of his cousin; and, as he marked the evident admiration which was therein expressed, he said, with a frank laugh which covered well the sneer that was lurking in his speech,—"By my faith! fair cousin, I think the advocate *was* in the wrong."

"Good troth, but I think so too," replied the count, joining in the laugh. "Well, my friends," he continued, addressing the deputies in a very different tone from that which he had formerly used; "get you gone, and be cautious for the future how ye listen to the delusive words of vain and ambitious men: the master of our household will see that ye are well entertained with white bread, good wine, and all the dainties of a christening; and as for the boy I struck," he added, taking a gold brooch or fermail from the bosom of his own vest, and putting it into the hands of Martin Fruse, "give him that to heal the blow. There, set down the vases on that table. We thank you for them; and, by our faith! we will show them to our lady there within."

With many a lowly reverence the men of Ghent withdrew, very well satisfied to have obtained pardon on easy terms. Young Albert Maurice was found below, fully recovered from the blow he had received; but it was in no degree effaced from his memory. His uncle immediately presented him with the rich brooch which the count had sent, never doubting but the boy would be delighted with the present; but the moment he received it, he dashed it down upon the ground, and setting his foot upon it, trampled it to atoms. What he muttered at the same time was unheard by any one but his uncle. The effect upon him, however, was such as to turn him deadly pale; and after having tasted of the count's wine, that he might not be suspected of disaffection, he hurried his nephew away to the house of a friendly citizen of Brussels, miserable, to all appearance, till he had got the boy free of the walls of the palace.

CHAPTER VI.

We have now concluded one period of our tale, and must beg the reader to leap boldly over twenty years. In regard to the events which intervened, of some we shall here give a slight sketch before proceeding; some we shall leave to unravel themselves in the course of the after history.

Take any body of men, as many in number as the characters which we have introduced already, and it will be seldom found that, at the end of so great a lapse of time, the whole are still upon the busy stage of life; nevertheless, such was the case in the present instance. Time, the great enemy of man, and of all man's works, had not leagued himself with death against any of those whom I have particularly noticed. In other respects, however, he had not failed to do his accustomed work. The youth had grown up into the man; the man of middle age was bowed beneath the load of years; and the infant in the cradle had reached the blossoming days of womanhood.

Of her, then, whose birth and baptism we have just commemorated, we shall speak in the first place, before proceeding to notice the change which had occurred in the other characters which we have brought upon the scene. Her infancy passed in the midst of prosperity and happiness, while the territories which she was destined to inherit flourished under the dominion of her grandfather,—that wise and virtuous prince who redeemed the errors of his early years by the generous patriotism of his latter days, and both merited and obtained, from neighbouring princes and his native subjects, the noble appellation of Philip the Good; and while under the eye of her own gentle mother, her education proceeded in calm tranquillity, and her home reposed in peace.

Scarcely had she attained the age of ten years, however, ere, left alone under the guidance of a severe and imperious father, she found that, according to the common fate of those in the highest stations, her lot

was to be any thing but happy. Gentle, kind, obedient, she endeavoured, by making her inclinations the slaves of her father's will, to obtain, at least, peace, by yielding to duty. Her hopes and expectations were, nevertheless, in vain. The continual perils to which Charles the Bold exposed himself, of course, kept his family in constant alarm and agitation; and the frequent and capricious changes of his policy, without obtaining for himself or his country any real advantage, only served to wring his daughter's heart.

After the death of his second wife, Isabel de Bourbon, the desire of a male heir induced him speedily to marry again; and the hatred which he had, by that time, conceived for Louis XI. made him choose for his bride Margaret of York, the sister of the King of England. His hopes of a son were disappointed; but upon his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, his marriage conferred an inestimable benefit. Margaret of York fully replaced in kindness and affection the mother she had lost; and habituated early herself to cares, to sorrows, and to dangers, she instilled into the mind of her step-daughter that patient fortitude which she had acquired in so bitter a school; and taught her, in all circumstances, both to bear up against despair, and to endure without complaint.

As years rolled on, the hand of the undoubted heiress of all Burgundy and Flanders became, of course, an object of ambition to many of the princes of Europe; and from the time that Mary reached the age of fifteen, to obtain possession of her person was a matter of open negotiation and subtle intrigue to all the neighbouring sovereigns. The brother of the King of France, the Duke of Calabria, the Prince of Tarentum, and the Duke of Savoy became successively the suitors for her hand; and her father, to each and all, held out hopes and expectations, which he either never intended to fulfil, or found cause to disappoint. The most selfish of sovereigns, and, perhaps, of men, the feelings of his child were never consulted throughout the whole transactions which followed. He looked upon her simply as an object of policy—a human seal, which, at his will, was to be affixed to the charter of conveyance, destined to give to some neighbouring prince the succession to his vast dominions.

Luckily, however, it so happened that Mary had made up her mind to her fate, and so guarded her own heart

and feelings, that all men remained indifferent to her till the sanction of her father warranted the gift of her affections. Thus she beheld treaties commenced and broken, her hand promised and refused, without either pain or pleasure, till, at length, a suitor appeared, who, with all those advantages which could satisfy the political ambition of her father, possessed all those qualities of mind and person calculated to gain her heart. Brave, chivalrous, and accomplished, graceful and well-formed in person, and handsome in features, Maximilian, son of the Emperor Frederick, had, at the same time, all that native kindness of heart which, giving a gentle courtesy to the whole demeanour, is far more winning than the most splendid acquirements; and such qualities might have been quite sufficient to win the heart of the heiress of Burgundy. Other things, indeed, were required by her father; but besides these personal qualities, he was the son of the richest monarch in Europe, the heir of the duchy of Austria, and would be, undoubtedly, successor to the imperial throne itself. Every object seemed attained by such an alliance; and when, after appearing for two years successively at the court of Burgundy, Maximilian demanded the hand of the beautiful heiress of the land, Mary, for the first time, heard with joy that it was promised to the new aspirant.

Long negotiations succeeded; and it was agreed that the duchy of Burgundy, freed from its homage to the crown of France, should be erected into an independent kingdom.

A grand meeting of the imperial and Burgundian courts was appointed at Treves for the conclusion of the marriage; and Charles the Bold, with his daughter, accompanied by a train of unrivalled splendour, set out for the place of rendezvous. Mary's heart beat high as she entered the ancient city; and, now taught to look upon Maximilian as her future husband, she yielded her whole heart to the influence of her first affection. But the greedy ambition of her father was destined to overthrow all those airy fabrics of happiness, of which her hopes and her imagination had been the architects. Charles insisted that the title of king should be granted to him previous to his daughter's marriage; while the emperor, who had watched his capricious changes on other occasions, with a jealous and somewhat indignant

eye, refused to confer the title he sought, till the hand of the heiress of Burgundy was irrevocably bestowed upon his son. Charles argued, and railed, and threatened in vain; and at length the emperor, wearied with his pertinacity, and offended by his intemperate violence, suddenly broke up his court, and left him, mad with rage and disappointment, to carry back his daughter to Brussels, with a heart bleeding in secret with the cruel wounds it had received.

Other negotiations succeeded with other princes; and though Mary heard, with apprehension and terror, of each new proposal, the capricious uncertainty of her father's disposition saved her from the still bitterer pangs of yielding her hand to another, while her heart was really given to Maximilian.

In the mean time disputes and wars succeeded; the projects of her marriage languished, or were abandoned; and while her father hastened to the last fatal field, where his military renown was extinguished in his blood, she remained with her gentle step-mother in Ghent, to weep the perils to which her parent's mad ambition exposed him, and to tremble at the sight of every packet that reached her from the Burgundian camp.

Such were the changes and events which had affected the fate of Mary of Burgundy, since we depicted her as an infant, born shortly after the arrival of the dauphin at the court of Brussels. Over the dauphin himself, greater alterations still had come in the course of passing years. From an exiled prince, he had become the king of a mighty nation; and time had stolen away all the graces of youth, and all those better feelings and nobler emotions which, in the freshness of early life, are more or less imparted to every human being, whatever may be the portion of selfish cunning added to neutralize them. However beneficial might be his policy to the country over which he ruled, however much his acts might advance the progress of society in Europe, and lead forward the world to a state of more general freedom and civilization, his objects were mean and personal, and individual ambition of the lowest kind was the motive for all his cunning schemes and artful policy. An immortal pen has, in our own day, portrayed his character with unequalled skill; and of Louis XI., at this period of his life, nothing further

can be said, than that he was the Louis XI. of Sir Walter Scott.

Of those who accompanied him on his journey, Thibalt of Neufchatel, Marshal of Burgundy, still remained—a weather-beaten warrior, and still, in a certain sense, a haughty noble. Though age, with its infirmities, had somewhat broken his strength, and had also softened his heart, he was ready at all times, nevertheless, to spring into the saddle at the trumpet's call: but so much, indeed, had he learned to look upon the inferior ranks with a milder eye, that he had become rather popular than otherwise; and among the peasants and burghers was generally known, at this time, by the name of good Count Thibalt. The germ of pride still remained, but its operation was directed in a different manner; and young nobles, and new soldiers, who were not always inclined to pay as much respect to the old officer's opinion as he thought his due, now monopolized the scorn which he had formerly bestowed upon the citizens; while the degree of popularity he had lately acquired among the lower classes, and the deference with which they invariably treated him, contrasting strongly with the self-sufficient arrogance of some of his young compeers, soothed his pride, gratified his vanity, and made him, day by day, more bending and complacent to those whom he had formerly despised.

On good Martin Fruse the passing of twenty years had brought, if not a green, at least a fat old age. He was not unwieldy, however; was rosy, and well respected among his fellow-citizens for his wealth, for his wisdom, and for his many memories of the mighty past; and, in short, good Martin Fruse was, in person and appearance, a man who had gone happily through many changes, increasing in riches, honour, and comfort, with very few cares to prey upon his mind, and scarcely an ailment through life to shatter his body. As he had proceeded, however, experience had done its work; and while he had become wiser, and had really obtained a greater insight into affairs of policy, he had grown less vain, and willingly restrained his personal efforts to composing the municipal squabbles of his native city, and directing the efforts of his townsmen for the extension of their commerce and the improvement of their manufactures.

His nephew, Albert Maurice, had been differently changed by the wand of the enchanter Time. His mind, indeed, was one of those firm, fixed, and steadfast essences, on which the passing of years makes but little alteration, except by expanding their capabilities by the exercise of their powers. From a boy, it is true, he had grown into a powerful and handsome man; and though, in partnership with his uncle, he held the peaceful station of a rich merchant of Ghent, yet he was skilled in all military exercises; and when the communes of Flanders had been called to the field, on pressing occasions, among the various struggles of that eventful period, he had shown knowledge, courage, and address, which had excited the wonder, and perhaps the jealousy, of many of those noble warriors who looked upon the trade of war as peculiarly their own. Whenever he returned home again, however, from the camp, he sank at once into the citizen; seemed to forget or to despise his military skill; and though gay and splendid among his own class, far from courting popularity, he appeared to conceal, purposely, the deep thoughts and striking qualities of his mind. Once or twice, indeed, he had been heard to burst into an eloquent and indignant rebuke to some of the nobles, on the occasion of the haughty vexations which they continually exercised upon the lower classes; but he seemed to regret his words as soon as spoken; and—as if he knew that, at some time, a fearful and deadly contest must arise between himself and the oppressors of his class, and strove anxiously, and with a feeling of awe, to delay it as long as possible—he avoided all matter of quarrel with the nobility of Ghent, or with the officers of the Duke of Burgundy. He seemed desirous of closing his eyes to subjects of offence; and when he heard of a brawl in any neighbouring part of the town, or when the other young citizens called upon him to take a lead in their frequent tumults, he would either quit the place for the time, or shut himself sternly in his own dwelling, in order to avoid any participation in the dangerous occurrences that were taking place.

On one of these occasions, when the city of Ghent, though not in open revolt, was keeping up an angry discussion with the high officers of the duke, Albert Maurice, then in his twenty-fourth year, obtained his uncle's

consent to travel into Italy, for the purpose of negotiating some transactions which their house was carrying on with the merchant lords of Venice. In that sweet climate, the nurse of arts and too often of crimes, he acquired an elegance of taste, and a grace of manner, unknown to the burghers of his native place. He came home skilled in many arts with which they were unacquainted; and, had his spirit been less powerful, his talents less commanding, it is not improbable that his fellow-citizens might have contemned or laughed at acquirements which they had not learned to appreciate, and might have scorned the travelled coxcomb who brought home strange modes and fashions to his native land. But Albert Maurice made a show of none; and it was only upon long solicitation, or on some moment of joyous festivity, that he would sing the sweet songs of a softer people, and accompany himself with instruments unknown in his own country.

His personal beauty, and the fascinating grace of his manners, made him seem a creature of a different race, and his superiority in every quality, both of mind and body, to those around him, might have been a blessing, had he not felt it himself; but he did feel it, and of course was discontented,—and who can doubt that any thing which makes man discontented with his state, without giving him the certainty of a better, is a curse! All eyes turned upon him with satisfaction; and many a soft, kind heart would willingly have given itself to him; but his thoughts were of another kind, and he could see none to love among the many by whom he was admired. The fair girls of Ghent—and many a fair girl was then, and is now, within its walls—thought him cold and proud, and blamed him for what was his misfortune, not his fault. His heart was one on which love might have taken as firm a hold as on that of any man that ever burned or died for woman since the world began: but he sought for his equal, I do not mean in rank, for that he never heeded—but in mind; and he found none such within the sphere of all he knew.

Shut out by circumstances from the higher ranks of society, the finer feelings, the better aspirations of his soul, were matter for a thousand disgusts; and though a native sense of what is noble in itself, and just to others, made him laboriously conceal the very superiority which he felt, as well as its consequences, yet the

conversation, the manners, the thoughts of those around him—even those with whom he was most intimately allied—were constant sources of hidden pain and annoyance. He lived among the people of Ghent, and he strove to live with them; and so far did he succeed, that though his talents and his occasional reserve made his townsfolk look upon him with no small reverence, the urbanity of his manners, when brought into casual contact with the other citizens, gained him a far greater degree of popularity than any general familiarity could have won.

The union of pride and ambition—and he had both qualities in his bosom—usually leads the man whose mind is so constituted, to seek to rise into the class above him: but both his pride and his ambition were too potent for that. He was proud of the very difference between his station and himself—he had a deep and settled love, too, of his country, and even of his class; and while his ambition was of a quality which would have snatched at empire, had there been a hope of success, the hatred and contempt in which he held the nobles were far too great for him to covet aught but the power to trample them down among those ranks whom they now oppressed.

Such had some of the characters, whom we have attempted to depict at an earlier period of life, become under the passing of twenty years. Time, in short, had done its wonted work on all—had expanded the bud and the blossom into the green leaf and the flower, and had changed the flower and the shoot into the ready fruit and the ripened ear. But there are others yet to be spoken of, and to them we will now return.

CHAPTER VII.

THE withering power of time, which, in brief space, can make such havoc on man, and all man's works, that friend shall scarce know friend, and grass shall have swallowed up the highways, is impotent against the ever renewing power of nature; and in the forest of Hannut, the twenty years which had passed seemed

scarcely to have made the difference of a day. Green oaks were withered, it is true; the lightning had scathed the pine, and rent the beech; the woodman's axe had been busy here and there; but, in constant succession, the children of the wood had grown up to take the place of those which had fallen; and the most discerning eye could scarce have traced a single change in all the forest scene around.

Days seemed to be altered, however, and manners to have changed, in the forest of Hannut; for, instead of very equivocal looking soldiers, and travellers who wandered on with fear and trembling, there was now to be seen, near the very same cascade by whose side we opened this book, a gay, light party, whose thoughts appeared all of joy, and to whom terror seemed perfectly a stranger. That party consisted of only three persons, besides their attendants; and mounted on splendid horses, whose high spirit, though bowed to the most complete obedience to man's will, was not in the slightest degree diminished, they rode gayly across the bridge, and paused by the side of the stream.

The first whom we shall notice—a powerful young cavalier, who might be in the thirtieth year of his age, who might be less, sun-burnt, but naturally fair, strong in all his limbs, but easy and graceful in his movements—sprang to the ground as they approached the waterfall; and laying his hand on the gilded bridle of a white jennet, that cantered on by his side, assisted the person who rode it to dismount.

She was a fair, beautiful girl, of about eighteen years of age, around whose broad white forehead fell clusters of glossy light brown hair; her eyebrows and her eyelashes, however, were dark; and through the long deep fringe of the latter looked forth a pair of blue and laughing eyes, which beamed with the same merry happiness that curled the arch of her sweet lips.

Two of the attendants who followed sprang forward to hold the bridle and the stirrup of the third person of the party, who dismounted more slowly, as became the gravity of his years. Time, indeed, had not broken, and had hardly bent him; but evidences of the iron-handed conqueror's progress were to be traced in the snowy hair and beard, which had once been of the deepest black; and in the long furrows deeply traced along the once smooth brow. In other respects, the

Lord of Hannut was but little changed. The same dark, grave cast of countenance remained; the same spare, but vigorous form; though, indeed, without appearing to stoop, his height seemed somewhat diminished since last we brought him before the reader's eyes. A gleam of affectionate pleasure lighted up his countenance, as he marked the graceful gallantry with which his young companion aided the fair girl who accompanied them to dismount; and when, after having rendered his service to the lady, the young cavalier turned to offer him his arm also, with a sort of half-apology for not having done so before, he replied, smiling, "Thou art better employed, dear boy; thinkest thou I have so far forgotten my chivalry as to grudge the attention thou bestowest upon a lady? Here, spread out here," he continued, turning to the attendants, and pointing to the green short turf which carpeted the bank of the stream just below the waterfall; "we could not find a better place for our meal than here."

By the birds which they carried on their wrists, it was evident that the whole party had been flying their hawks, the favourite amusement, at that time, of the higher classes throughout Flanders. They now, however, seated themselves to a sort of sylvan meal, which was spread upon the turf by the attendants, who, with that mixture of familiarity and respect which were usual and perfectly compatible with each other in those days, and in such sports, sat down with the persons of higher rank, at once to partake of their fare, and assist them at their meal.

The conversation was gay and lively, especially between the two younger persons whom we have noticed. They were evidently in habits of intimacy; and on his part there appeared that tender but cheerful attention to his fair companion which argued feelings of a somewhat warmer nature than kindred affection, yet without any of that apprehension which love—if the return be doubtful—is sure to display. Her manner was of a different kind; it was not less affectionate—it was not less gentle—but it was of that light and playful character under which very deep and powerful attachment sometimes endeavours to conceal itself—that timidity which hides itself in boldness—a consciousness of feeling deeply, which sometimes leads to the assumption of feeling little. It was understood, however, and appre-

ciated by her companion, who, possibly, had taken some more serious moment, when the light and active guardian of the casket slept, to pry into the secret of the heart within.

Love, however, it would appear, is insatiable of assurances; and, probably, it was on some fresh demand for new or greater acknowledgment that the lady replied to a half-whispered speech,—"Certainly, dear Hugh! Can you doubt it? I will try, with all my mind, to love you; for, as we are to be married whether we love each other or not, it is but good policy to strive to love each other, if it be possible." And as she spoke, she fixed her eyes upon her companion's face, with a look of malicious inquiry, as if to see what effect the lukewarmness of her speech would produce upon a heart she knew to be sufficiently susceptible.

He only laughed, however, and replied, "Sing me a song, then, dear Alice, to cheer these green woods, and make me think you love me better than you do."

"Not I, indeed," replied the young lady. "In the first place, I would not cheat thee for the world; and in the next place, neither song nor *pastourelle*, nor *sirvente*, nor *virelai*, will I ever sing, till I am asked in song myself. Sing, sing, Hugh! Thou hast been at the bright court of France, and art, I know, a master of the *gaie science*. Sing the light lay you sang yester-evening; or some other, if you know one. It matters not much which."

"Be it so, if thou wilt sing afterward," replied the young cavalier; and without further question, than an inquiring glance towards the Lord of Hannut, he sang, in a full, rich, melodious voice, one of the common songs of the day; but which was not inapplicable to her speech, as in it a lover is supposed to beseech his mistress to sing to him in each of the various seasons of the year His song, though in a different language, was somewhat to the following effect:—

SONG.

Sing to me in the days of spring-time, beloved;
In those days of sweetness, oh, sing to me!
When all things by one glad spirit are moved,
From the sky-lark to the bee.

Sing to me in the days of summer-time, dearest;
In those days of fire, oh, sing to me, then!
When suns are brightest, and skies are clearest,
Sing, sing in the woods again.

Sing to me still in the autumn's glory;
In the golden fall-time, oh, be not
Some sweet, wild ditty from ancient story
That well with the time may suit.

Sing to me still in the hours of sadness,
When winter across the sky is driven;
But sing not the wild tones of mirth and gladness,
Then sing of peace and heaven.

"A pretty song enough, for a man to sing," observed the young lady, as her lover concluded; "but, as I do not choose to be dictated to by anybody else, I shall just sing you such a song as suits me myself, whether in season or out of season. What say you, dearest uncle?" she added, turning to the Lord of Hannut; and laying the fair rounded fingers of her soft hand upon his, "what shall I sing him?" And as she spoke, she raised her eyes towards the sky, as if trying to remember some particular song from among the many that she knew; but scarcely had she done so, when an involuntary cry burst from her lips,—"Good God!" she exclaimed, "there are armed men looking at us from the top of the bank,—there, there!"

The whole party started up, and turned their eyes in the direction which hers had taken. There was, indeed, a rustle heard among the trees; and a stone or two, detached from above, rolled down the crag, and plunged into the stream at its foot. But no one was to be seen; and, after gazing for a moment in silence, the lover beckoned one of the attendants to follow, and bounding up the most inaccessible part of the cliff, notwithstanding the fair girl's entreaty to forbear, he plunged into the brushwood, in pursuit of the person who had disturbed their tranquillity.

"You are dreaming, my fair Alice," said the Lord of Hannut; "and have sent poor Hugh de Mortmar on a foolish errand."

"Nay, indeed, uncle," replied Alice, "I dreamed not at all. I am not one to dream in such a sort. For God's sake! bid some one ride to bring us assistance, and send some of the men up to aid poor Hugh; for, as sure as I live, I saw two or three faces with steel caps above, looking through the branches of the trees. Hark! do you not hear voices? Climb up, sirs, if you be men, and aid your young lord."

The attendants looked to the baron; and on his part,

the Lord of Hannut only smiled with an air of incredulity; when, much indeed to the surprise of Alice, her lover appeared above the moment after; and, springing easily down the rock, declared that all was clear beyond.

She gazed on him for a moment in serious silence, and then merely replied, "It is very strange!" Hugh de Mortmar cast himself down again by her side, and once more pressed her to sing; but it was in vain. Alice was evidently agitated and alarmed; and finding it impossible to shake off her terror, she besought her uncle to break up the party and return to the castle, notwithstanding the assurances of all parties that she must have been deceived by the waving of some of the boughs, or the misty spray of the cataract. Finding, at length, that to reason with her was in vain, her uncle agreed to return; and the horses being led forward, the whole party remounted, and, with their hawks once more upon their hands, made the best of their way back towards the castle of Hannut. For the first two or three miles, however, Alice continued anxiously to watch every opening of the trees on either side of the road; remaining in such a state of alarm, that her falcon's wings were continually flapping, from the agitated haste with which she turned to gaze on every object that they passed on the road. It was only when they came within sight of the vassal town, and the castle on its high rock, about half a mile beyond, that she seemed to consider herself in safety; and the long, deep breath she drew, as they passed through the barbacan, announced what a load was taken off her mind when she found herself within the walls of her uncle's castle.

"You have dwelt so long in cities, dear Alice," said the Lord of Hannut, laughing, "that the forest is a strange world to you, and your imagination peoples it with creatures of its own. I shall write to your father, my good Lord of Imbercourt, to say, that he must leave you many a month with me yet, till we have cured you of seeing these wild men of the woods."

"Nay, uncle," replied the young lady, who had by this time recovered her playful spirits, and looked up in his face as she spoke with a smile of arch meaning; "if I were to be terrified with imaginary things, I can tell you I should not have come at all; for my maids have got many a goodly story of the castle of Hannut and its

forest—ay, and its lord to boot; and in the morning after our arrival I found that they had all burnt shoes and twisted necks, with sitting the whole of the night before with their feet in the fire and their heads turned over their shoulders."

The Lord of Hannut heard her with a melancholy smile. "And hadst thou no fear thyself, my fair Alice?" he demanded; "didst thy imagination never fill the dark end of the chamber with sprites and hobgoblins?"

"Nay, nay, in truth, not I!" replied the young lady; "such things have no terrors for me; but when I saw three armed men looking down upon us in the forest, and thought that there might be thirty more behind, there was some cause for terror."

The Lord of Hannut and Hugh de Mortmar,—in whom the reader has, doubtless, by this time discovered that Hugh of Gueldres who, twenty years before, was found sleeping by the cascade,—looked at each other with a meaning smile, but replied nothing; and indeed the conversation was here brought to a conclusion by a variety of unwonted sounds which now suddenly rose up from the forest below. Seldom was it, in truth, that those wild woods rang with the clang of charging horse, and echoed to the blast of the trumpets; but such was the case in the present instance: and as the sounds came borne upon the wind through the open windows, the brow of the Lord of Hannut darkened, and his eye flashed, while the cheek of the younger cavalier flushed as if with anger.

"By the Lord! our fair Alice is right, it would seem!" cried Hugh de Mortmar; "there are more men in the wood than we thought for. What, ho! warder!" he exclaimed, leaning from the narrow window, and shouting to some one stationed in the gallery of a tall slender tower, which, more like some Moorish minaret than any thing else, rose towering above all the others on the opposite side of the court-yard. "What, ho! warder! what seest thou down in the woods below?—By the Lord! there is another blast," he added, as the trumpets again echoed, clanging through the woods.

The next moment the loud voice of the warder was heard in reply,—"I see a plump of spears under the arms of Burgundy, running down a handful of the green riders, —but they have not caught them yet. They come closer —they come closer," he added; "but the riders make

face—they turn again, and spur on—the men-at-arms are thrown out; but I can see no more, my lord; they have all got beneath the haggard hill."

"Sound the ban-cloche, ho!" exclaimed the young cavalier: "arm, and saddle! arm, and saddle, below there!" he continued, shouting to some of the groups who were assembled in the court-yard. "I would fain see who it is," he added, turning to the Lord of Hannut, "who dares to hunt down any men in these woods, your free domain, without your good leave, my lord."

"Beware, Hugh, beware!" said the Lord of Hannut, holding up his hand with a warning gesture.

"I will, I will, indeed, my lord," he replied; "I will be most cautious." So saying, he sprang down the steps into the court-yard, and, while the great bell or ban-cloche rang out its warning peal over hill and dale, he gave rapid orders for arming a small body of men; and was springing on his own horse to lead them down to the valley below, when the warder gave notice that the party of Burgundians he had before seen, together with a considerable body of strangers, were winding up the steep road that led directly to the castle.

Hugh de Mortmar paused; and the instant after, a trumpet was blown at the barbacan, by a squire sent forward by the party to announce the immediate approach of the noble Lord of Imbercourt to the dwelling of his good brother-in-law of Hannut.

The gates of the castle were immediately thrown open; the armed retainers of its lord were drawn up to receive his honoured guest; and Alice ran down to meet her father, whose unexpected coming seemed a gratifying event to all. Hugh de Mortmar, however, lingered behind, and conversed for a few moments in a low and hurried tone with the Lord of Hannut; and the only words which were heard,—"It is strange that he should have done so in your domains, my lord—a man so careful in his conduct as he is in general—they surely would never dare to attack *him*,"—seemed to show that they spoke of the events which had just taken place in the forest. While thus conversing, they overtook Alice of Imbercourt, whose impatience had hurried her forward; and then dropping the subject on which they were speaking, they advanced with her even beyond the grate of the barbacan, and stood on the edge of the hill, looking down upon the large party that ap-

proached, as it wound slowly up the steep ascent which led to the castle.

The cavalcade soon came near; and it became evident, as it did so, that it consisted of two distinct bodies: the one being but partially armed, and riding under the banner of the Lord of Imbercourt; the other being clothed in steel from head to heel, and bearing conspicuous the cognizance of the house of Burgundy. The first band, however, was the most numerous, and might consist, perhaps, of a hundred men, independent of a number of grooms, horse-boys, and varlets, as they were called, leading several spare horses—some perfectly unburdened, and some loaded with large quantities of armour, tied together confusedly with ropes and chains, and so disposed as not to be burdensome to the horse. The other party seemed to have no baggage of any kind; and the arms of all sorts which they employed they bore about their own persons.

Thus accoutred, both bodies wound on up the slope, glancing in and out of the scattered wood, which, now tinted with all the thousand shades of the declining sun, clothed the ascent, and cast long marking shadows across the winding road of yellow sand. Now, the horsemen, passing through the depths of the wood, could scarcely be distinguished from the trees amid which they advanced; now, emerging from the overhanging boughs, they stood out clear upon the evening sky, as their path skirted along the edge of the cliff. At first all appeared indistinct—one confused mass of horses and riders; but as soon as they came nearer the form of each individual horseman became defined; and gradually their features, as they wore their helmets up, could be distinguished by those who stood and watched their approach.

At the head of the first party rode a tall, handsome, middle-aged man, with a countenance which was grave without being austere. When within a few yards of the top of the hill, he threw his horse's rein to a squire, and, springing lightly to the ground, advanced with a quick step towards the party assembled to meet him. Yielding first to natural affection, he cast his arms round his daughter, Alice of Imbercourt, and pressed her to his bosom. He then saluted frankly and kindly the Lord of Hannut and Hugh de Mortmar; and, as he held their hands in each of his, he said, in a low and hurried tone, intended to meet their ear, and their ear alone, before

the rest of the party came up, "I beseech you, my good brother, and you, my dear Hugh—whom one day I shall call my son—whatever you may hear presently, bridle your anger. Your rights have been somewhat violated by the leader of that band behind; but I have prevailed upon him to desist: and both because he is a high officer of our sovereign lord the duke, and because these times are too threatening from abroad to admit of feuds between subjects at home, I beseech ye to govern your indignation as much as may be."

The followers of Imbercourt had halted as soon as they reached the level ground or terrace in face of the barbacan; and the leader of the second band had by this time gained the brow of the hill, and now rode quickly up to the party at the gate. He was a tall, gaunt, bony man of about forty, with keen eagle's features, and a look of that bold assurance which proceeds more from animal courage, and a mind continually upon its guard, than from conscious rectitude of action or design. He was armed at all points except the head, which was covered alone by its short, curly, grizzled hair; and his basnet hung beside his axe at his saddle-bow. Such was the appearance now borne by Maillotin du Bac, the famous Prévôt Maréchal of Burgundy, who, having been himself one of the greatest plunderers of the time, had been appointed by Charles of Burgundy to root out the bands by which the country was infested—probably on the faith of the old adage, which recommends us to set a thief to catch a thief.

"You are my Lord of Hannut, fair sir, I presume," said the prévôt, dismounting, and speaking in that coarse, sharp, jarring tone of voice which is only fit for a hangman.

The Lord of Hannut answered by a stately bow, and the other proceeded: "My good Lord of Imbercourt, here, whom I reverence and respect, as in duty bound—he being as stout a soldier as he is a worthy counsellor—has but now prayed, or rather commanded,—for he having taken the responsibility upon himself, I have yielded of course to his injunctions,—has commanded me to desist from pursuing the brigands and plunderers who, for many years past, have haunted this forest of Hannut."

"Sir," replied the Lord of Hannut, "I, living within the precincts of the wood itself, am, it appears, sadly

ignorant of what goes on beneath its shade; for during nearly twenty years I have heard of no outrage whatsoever committed within the bounds of my domain. Had I done so—had any tale of robbery or pillage met my ears—I, as supreme lord, holding a right of exercising justice both high and low, would not have failed to clear the territory within my jurisdiction of such gentry as you mention; nor shall I certainly suffer any one else to interfere with my rights, within my own lands."

"My lord, my lord!" replied the prévôt; "I will easily furnish you with proof that your forest is tenanted as I say. Did we not, within this half-hour, encounter a whole party of as undoubted brigands as ever lived?"

"That you attacked some persons in the forest, Sir Prévôt, was well enough seen from the belfry of the castle," rejoined Hugh de Mortmar, with a frowning brow; "but whether they were not as honest or honester persons than yourself remains to be proved, and shall be inquired into most strictly. At all events, sir, you have infringed upon the rights of my uncle, which must be inquired into also. Well, well, my dear lord," he added, noticing a sign by which the Lord of Hannut required him to be silent; "well, well,—I say no more than that these thief-catchers grow too insolent."

The brow of Maillotin du Bac bent, his eyebrows almost met, and his left hand played ominously with the hilt of his dagger as he muttered, "Thief-takers!" But further discussion was cut short by the Lord of Hannut, who exclaimed, "Peace, Hugh! peace!—we must not show scanty hospitality to any one. Sir Maillotin du Bac, we will speak further with you hereafter on the subjects that you mention; and if you can prove to us that any outrage of any kind has been committed within the limits of my domain, both my nephew and myself will do our best to punish the offenders. But neither duke nor king shall exercise, within my lordship, the rights which belong alone to me."

"Outrage, sir!" rejoined the prévôt; "did not the men who burnt the house of the Lord of Harghen take refuge in your forests within this month?"

"Whether they did or not, I cannot say," replied the Lord of Hannut; "but their burning the house of that audacious villain,—the oppressor of the poor, the plunderer of the widow and the orphan,—was no very evil

deed in my eyes. However, let us not bandy words here at the gate; we will speak further this evening."

The whole party now passed through the barbacan, and the Lord of Hannut gave special order to his seneschal to attend to the comfort of the soldiers, while he himself led his brother-in-law, the Lord of Imbercourt, and a few of that nobleman's most distinguished attendants, towards the great hall of the castle.

Maillotin du Bac followed boldly, as one of the chief guests; and finding that no great courtesy was shown him in marshalling the way, he exclaimed, in a loud and intrusive voice,—"My lord! my lord! before we leave our men, I must crave that you would yield me the use of a dungeon."

"For your own abode, sir?" demanded Hugh de Mortmar, with not the most gracious smile in the world.

"No, no," replied the prévôt; "but for yon prisoner there:" and he pointed to a part of the court-yard where two of his followers were aiding a young man of a powerful frame and striking appearance to dismount from his horse, which was rendered difficult by his arms being tightly pinioned behind.

"That can be no thief, surely," said Hugh de Mortmar; "I never saw a nobler countenance. By his dress, too, he seems a burgher of the first order."

"The gown does not make the monk," replied Maillotin du Bac, with a grim smile. "If he be no thief, he may be somewhat worse. However, he was not taken on these territories, and therefore, my good lord, his capture can be no offence to you. For courtesy's sake, and for the prince's service, I claim the use of a dungeon for this night. He is a state prisoner, and must be guarded carefully."

"Be it so, Sir Prévôt," replied the Lord of Hannut; "thank God, all my dungeons are clear at present; and far be it from me to oppose the due exercise of your office in the duke's service."

"Said like a worthy lord, as I always held you," replied the prévôt. "Where shall we bestow him?"

"Roger de Lorens," said the Lord of Hannut, turning to his seneschal, "show this worthy gentleman, the prévôt of our lord the duke, the different prison-rooms beneath the square tower; let him choose which he will, as most secure; and when he has made his choice, give him up the key thereof. Be the prisoner under

your own charge, Sir Maillotin du Bac," he added; "yet, for the honour of my dwelling, I trust that you will let his treatment be as gentle as may be. Let him have wine and other refreshments to keep his spirits up, I pray you."

"Black bread and foul water would be good enough for him," replied Maillotin du Bac; "but at your request, my lord, he shall have better fare. Sir Seneschal, I follow you; lead the way. Ho! Martin du Garch, bring along the prisoner."

Thus saying, the prévôt of the Duke of Burgundy,—who, though a knight and a man of good family, had once, as we have before noticed, been a notorious adventurer, and had now become the great persecutor of his former comrades,—followed the seneschal of Hannut across the court-yard, towards the passage which led to the dungeons. In the mean while, the Lord of Hannut, with Hugh de Mortmar, and the Lord of Imbercourt, with his daughter Alice, advanced to the great hall, where preparations were already in course for serving the evening meal.

CHAPTER VIII.

While the Prévôt of Burgundy had remained within ear-shot Imbercourt had maintained a profound silence, or, speaking in a low familiar tone to his daughter, had appeared perfectly inattentive to what was going on beside him. No sooner, however, had they passed on through the great hall, and up a flight of steps, into a large sort of withdrawing-room, in which it was the custom of the guests in those days to wash their hands before dinner, than he closed the door with his own hand, and earnestly thanked the two noble gentlemen by whom he was accompanied for their forbearance on the present occasion. "I have much, much to tell you, my noble brother-in-law," he said; "and much on which to ask your advice. Much have I also to tell you, Hugh," he added, laying his hand on the arm of the younger of the two noblemen; "but I must do it in as few words as possible before we are joined by that

unworthy man, whom we must not offend, though he be part spy, part hangman, part cut-throat. In the first place, in your solitude here, you scarcely know the state either of the duchy of Burgundy or of the county of Flanders; both of which are unhappily in so precarious a situation that it will need infinite moderation, prudence, and skill, on the part of all true lovers of their country, to keep us from events too fearful to contemplate Throughout the whole of Duke Charles's dominions the nobles are turbulent and discontented; the citizens rebellious and insolent; and, to crown all, the duke himself, never very temperate in his conduct, since the defeat of Granson seems to have given unbridled rein to his fury, and to have cast all common prudence away as a burdensome encumbrance."

"We have heard, indeed," said the Lord of Hannut, "of his having hanged a garrison of four hundred Swiss, which he found in a town in Lorraine,—a most barbarous and inhuman act, which, if he commit many such, will make all good men abandon him."

"Too true, indeed," replied Imbercourt; "but I fear this is but a prelude to greater outrages."

"Ay, and to greater misfortunes," interrupted the Lord of Hannut. "If there be any truth in the starry influences, he has met with some deep misfortune already, and will meet with greater still ere long. When heard you from the duke?" he added, seeing a doubtful smile curl the lip of his brother-in-law, as he referred to an art in which Imbercourt placed less faith than most of his contemporaries.

"Our last news is more than a fortnight old," replied Imbercourt; "the duke was then marching rapidly towards the mountains. But it was not of his intemperance towards the Swiss I was about to speak, though his conduct to them has been cruel enough. Still they were enemies; but he seems resolved to drive the men of Ghent into revolt also; and he has commanded his prévôt to arrest any one, whether merchant, mechanic, or noble, who attempts to pass the frontier from Ghent into France. The prisoner that you saw but now is the first-fruit of this precious order; that meddling fool, Du Bac, who, like the tiger, loves blood for blood's sake, takes care to fulfil every intemperate order of the duke to the very uttermost, especially against the Gandois, towards whom he and some other of his fellows have a

most deadly hatred. I can hear of no precise offence which the prisoner has committed, though his captor has shown me some letters found upon him, which he would fain construe into treason; and if they urge the matter farther against him, they will drive the men of Ghent mad outright. Why, one-half of their trade is with France!"

"How is it then, my lord," demanded Hugh, "that you do not interfere to set him at liberty?"

"I dare not for my head," replied Imbercourt. "Besides, I am not here in the capacity of counsellor: I am now, by the duke's order, marching to join him with the small force that you see,—all, indeed, that I have been able to raise. But to the object of my coming! Hugh, the duke needs men, and calls angrily on all his vassals to take the field. Often and earnestly have I entreated for clemency towards your father, and my entreaties have been in vain. One good stroke in the field, however, done by your hand, were worth more than all the eloquence that the tongue of man could ever boast. Gather together what forces you can, and follow me to the camp, under the name that you have at present assumed. I will take care that you shall have the opportunity of distinguishing yourself: and, from your conduct both in Spain and Italy, I fear not but—"

"It is in vain, my lord, it is in vain," replied Hugh de Mortmar. "Never will I draw my sword for a man who holds my father a close prisoner: surely it is enough not to draw my sword against him; and it has only been from the hope that this fair hand"—and as he spoke he raised that of Alice, who had been listening, with her deep blue eyes full of anxious attention—"and it has only been from the hope that this fair hand would form a bond which, uniting the fate of Imbercourt and Gueldres together, would render them too strong for tyranny to resist, that I have refrained, during the last year, from attempting to open the gates of my father's prison with my sword, while the oppressor is embarrassed with wars and misfortunes that his own grasping and cruel disposition have brought upon his head."

"I cannot blame your feelings, Hugh," replied the Lord of Imbercourt, "nor will I hurt you by pointing out the somewhat serious causes of offence which have induced the duke to treat your father with so great

severity; but do you, at the same time, moderate your angry terms, and remember that Charles of Burgundy is my sovereign lord, my benefactor, and my friend. I think I need say no more."

He spoke with grave and impressive earnestness, and seemed about to proceed to some other part of the subject, when the heavy clanging step of Maillotin du Bac, as he walked nonchalantly up the stairs, from the great hall, into the withdrawing-room, warned the Lord of Imbercourt that a suspicious ear was nigh, and he merely added, "We will speak more to-night."

The prévôt entered the room with a look of great satisfaction, slipping at the same time the handle of an enormous key over the thong of his sword-belt, which he again buckled over his shoulder; so that the key, dropping down till it struck against his sword, hung by the side of the more chivalrous weapon, offering no bad type of the character of the wearer.

"Admirable dungeons these, my good Lord of Hannut," he reiterated as he entered,—"admirable dungeons, admirable dungeons indeed!—Your own construction, I doubt not, and a good construction it is. I defy the nimblest cutpurse in the empire to make his way thence, while this key hangs at my side. The window, indeed, the window is a little too wide; what the devil the rogues want windows for at all I don't understand,—but it is just a thought too wide. I have known a fat young rogue so starve himself down in a week's time, that he would get through a hole that would not have passed his thigh when first he was taken. No fear of yon fellow below, however; it would require a precious hole to pass his chest and shoulders."

"Pray, what is the poor youth's offence?" demanded the Lord of Hannut; but as the other was about to reply, the pages and varlets—as the inferior servants were called in that day,—brought in basins, ewers, and napkins, for the guests to wash, while the trumpets sounded loud without; and, in a few moments afterward, the whole party were seated at their evening meal.

As must always be the case in such meetings,—when the ingredients of the assembly are discrepant in themselves, notwithstanding the fortuitous circumstances which may for the time have brought them together—the conversation was broken and interrupted. Some-

times the loud swell of many voices made, for a minute or two, an unspeakable din. Sometimes one or two protracted the conversation in a lower tone, after the others had ceased; but still, every subject that was started dropped after a few minutes' discussion, and the parties betook themselves again to demolishing the huge piles of meat that, according to the custom of those times, were set before them. Wine was in plenty, but all drank sparingly, except the prévôt, and one or two of the officers who followed the Lord of Imbercourt. For his part, Maillotin du Bac seemed determined that, as far as the equality of his favour went, no jealousy should exist between the trencher and the pottle-pot. His food swam down his throat in burgundy, and the consequences were such as are usual with men of strong constitutions and well-seasoned brains. He lost not in the least degree the use of his senses; but his tongue, on which he was never wont to impose any very strict restraint, obtained an additional degree of liberty after the fifth or sixth cup he had quaffed; and perceiving the Lord of Hannut speaking for a few moments in a low tone to his brother-in-law, he concluded at once that their conversation must refer to his prisoner; and, resuming the subject without further ceremony, he replied to the question his entertainer had put to him before dinner—so abruptly, indeed, that for the moment no one understood what he meant.

"Offence, indeed!" exclaimed Maillotin du Bac—"offence enough, I trow; why now, I'll tell you how it was. We had just come out of Namur, where we had supped,—not quite so well as we have here, it's true; no matter for that, we had wine enough—and we were quartering ourselves in a little village down below, when one of my fellows, as stout a hand as ever was born, got saying something civil to the wife of a draper, just at the door of her shop. What more I don't know, but the foolish cullion took it into her head to squeak out; when up comes my young gallant there in the dungeon, and at one blow fells my fellow Stephen to the ground with a broken jaw. What the devil business had he with it? If he had been an old lover of hers, well enough; but he confesses that he never saw her before till that moment, and must come up and meddle, because she chose to squeal like a caught hare."

Hugh de Mortmar turned his eyes upon the Lord of

Imbercourt, who bit his lip, and observed gravely,—"Were this all the young man's offence, Sir Prévôt, it would behoove us to consider the matter better before we give way to your hankering for dungeons and cords."

"Ha, ha! my lord," replied the prévôt, with a grin, "not so great a fool as that either! Had I not thought to make more of the good youth, I would have split his scull where he stood, with my axe; and his punishment taking place in *chaudemelée*, as the laws of St. Louis have it, we should have heard no more of the matter; but I knew the gallant well by sight,—one who affects popularity among the turbulent folk of Ghent; and having orders to arrest all who attempted to cross the frontier into France, I laid hold of him forthwith, examined his papers, and found sufficient, with a little good management, to give him a cool dangle by the neck in the fresh air of some fine September morning. But what need I say more? You yourself have seen the letters."

"Meddling fool!" muttered Imbercourt to himself; "he will contrive to drive the duke's subjects into revolt at home, while he is assailed by enemies abroad." This speech, however, passed no farther than the ears of the two persons next to him. And the conversation soon turned to the bands of freebooters which, the prévôt stoutly asserted, harboured in the forest of Hannut.

A few words passed in an under tone, between Hugh de Mortmar and the Lord of Hannut; and at length the old noble proceeded to discuss with the prévôt of the Duke of Burgundy the infraction of his rights which had been committed by that officer in the morning. The prévôt, however, sturdily maintained his ground, declaring that he himself, and all his band, consisting of about forty persons, had encountered and pursued a considerable body of men, whose appearance and demeanour left not the slightest doubt in regard to their general trade and occupation Going further still, he appealed to the Lord of Imbercourt himself, who had come up while the freebooters were still in sight, and who actually did confirm his account in every particular.

"Well, sir," replied the Lord of Hannut, "since such is the case, far be it from me to impede the execution of justice. The maintenance of the law within my own territories I have always hitherto attended to myself—and that so strictly, that for twenty years I

have heard of no outrage within the limits of my own domain—"

"Why, as to that, my lord," interrupted the prévôt, grinning, "we do hear that you have an especial police of your own,—a sort of airy archers of the guard, who keep better watch and ward than mortal eyes can do. Nevertheless I must not neglect my duty, while I am in the body; and in doing it, I fear neither man nor spirit."

"I know not to what you are pleased to allude, sir," replied the Lord of Hannut, frowning: "nevertheless I may find many means to punish those who are insolent. However, as you say that you have seen evil-disposed persons in the forest, and my Lord of Imbercourt here confirms your statement, I will willingly grant you permission for one day to scour the whole of my domain from side to side; and if you should find any one strong enough to make head against you, my own vassals shall be summoned to give you aid. After that day, however, you must withdraw your troop, and retire, nor ever again presume to set foot within my bounds without my permission."

"One day, my lord," replied the prévôt, "will be hardly—"

"I shall grant no more, sir," said the Lord of Hannut, rising from the table, in which example he was followed by several of his guests; "I shall grant no more, sir; and the concession which I make proceeds solely from a feeling of respect for my good lord the Duke of Burgundy. Though I rise," he added, addressing all the party from a general feeling of courtesy, "though I rise, do not hold it, gentlemen, as a signal to break off your revelry. Spare not the flagon, I beseech you; and here are comfits and spices to give zest to your wine."

Thus saying, he retired from the hall; and, leading the way to the battlements, entered into a long and, to them, interesting conversation with Imbercourt and Hugh de Mortmar,—as we shall continue to call the son of the imprisoned Duke of Gueldres.

With all his eloquence, however, Imbercourt failed to persuade the young cavalier to join the armies of the Duke of Burgundy. To every argument he replied, that men fought for their friends, not their enemies; and such he should ever hold Charles of Burgundy to be, till Adolphus of Gueldres was set at liberty. All that could be obtained from him was a promise not to

attempt his father's liberation by arms, till one more effort had been made to persuade Charles the Bold to grant his freedom upon other terms.

"Consider well, Hugh, the peculiar situation in which you stand," said the Lord of Imbercourt; "the secret of your birth rests with myself and my good brother here alone; but did the duke know that the son of Adolphus of Gueldres is still living, the imprisonment of your father would, in all probability, become more severe, and your own personal safety might be very doubtful. An ineffectual attempt to liberate your father must instantly divulge all; nor could I, though I have promised you my Alice, in case we can obtain by peaceful means that which we so much desire,—nor could I, as a faithful servant of the house of Burgundy, give you my daughter's hand, if you were once actually in arms against the lord I serve."

"It is a hard alternative," said Hugh de Mortmar—"it is a hard alternative;" and as he spoke he bent down his eyes, and pondered for several minutes on the difficult situation in which he was placed.

His heart, however, was full of the buoyant and rejoicing spirit of youth; and the cares that ploughed it one minute, only caused it to bring forth a harvest of fresh hopes the next. Hard as was his fate in some respects, when he compared it with that of the young man who now tenanted one of the dungeons of that very castle,—a comparison to which his mind was naturally called,—he felt no gratification, indeed, as some would argue, at the evils of his fellow-creature's lot; but he felt that there was much to be grateful for in his own. Hope, and liberty, and love were all before him; and his expectations rose high, as he thought how much worse his fate might have been. Such ideas led him to think over and to pity the situation of the unhappy prisoner; and quitting the subject of his own affairs, he demanded of the Lord of Imbercourt, whether he, as a counsellor of the duke, could not take upon himself to set the unfortunate burgher at liberty.

"I would wellnigh give my right hand to do so," replied Imbercourt, "not alone for the sake of simple justice to an individual, but for the sake of the peace and tranquillity of the whole state; but I must not do it, my young friend. I have seen the letters which this Du Bac found upon his person: they consist of little more

than the murmurs and complaints of discontented citizens, such as are to be met with in all countries and in all times; and which at any other period would attract no attention whatever. At present, however, with discontent and turbulence spreading over the whole land; with courtiers who find it their interest to urge the duke on to acts of insane violence; and with a prince whose temper and power are equally uncontrollable; those papers *may* cost the young man's life, *will* probably set the city of Ghent into open revolt, and *might* light a flame in the land which would require oceans of blood to extinguish. Nevertheless I dare not interfere."

Hugh de Mortmar made no reply, but mused for a few moments in silence; and then, with a gay, light laugh, and a jest about some other matter, he left his two elder companions, and proceeded to seek his fair Alice through all the long, rambling chambers, and retired and quiet bowers, so favourable for whispered words and unmarked meetings, with which every castle of that day was most conveniently furnished.

Maillotin du Bac, in the mean while, continued sturdily to bear up under the repeated attacks of burgundy upon his brain. Draught after draught he swallowed, in company with some of the old and seasoned soldiers, who were no way loath to join him; but at length the sun went down, night fell, the cresset was lighted in the large hall; and, unwillingly giving up his cup, he suffered the board to be removed, and cast himself down on a seat beside the fire, which the vast extent of the chamber, and the little sunshine that ever found its way in, either by the high window or the far door, rendered not unpleasant even on a summer's evening. A number of others gathered round; and the wine having produced sufficient effect to render them all rather more imaginative than usual, the stories of hunting and freebooters, with which the evening commonly began, in such a castle, soon deviated into many a tale of superstition. Every one had something wonderful to relate; and such, indeed, was the unction with which many a history of ghost, and spirit, and demon was told by several of the party, and was listened to by the auditory, that two of the Lord of Imbercourt's officers, who were playing at tables under the light of the lamp; and several others, who had been amusing themselves at a little distance with the very ancient and interesting game of "pitch

and toss;" abandoned those occupations, to share more fully in the legends which were going on round the fire. Each individual helped his neighbour on upon the road of credulity and superstition; and when, at length, Maillotin du Bac rose, from a sense of duty, to visit his prisoner, an attention which he never neglected, the greater part of his companions, feeling themselves in a dwelling whose visiters were very generally reported to be more frequently of a spiritual than of a corporeal nature, got up simultaneously, and agreed to accompany him on his expedition.

Lighted by a torch, they wound down some of the narrow, tortuous staircases of the building; and pausing opposite a door, the massive strength and thickness of which the prévôt did not fail to make his comrades remark, they were soon gratified further by beholding the inside of the dungeon in which the unhappy burgher was confined. Maillotin du Bac satisfied himself of his presence, by thrusting the torch rudely towards his face as he half-sat, half-reclined on a pile of straw which had been spread out for his bed; and then setting down a pitcher of wine which he had brought with him, the prévôt closed the door again without a word. The only further ceremony was slipping the key over his sword-belt, from which he had detached it to open the door; and the whole party, once more returning to upper air, separated for the night, and retired to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

Leaving the brutal officer and his companions to sleep off the fumes of the wine they had imbibed, we must return to the dungeon where, in darkness and in gloom, sat Albert Maurice, the young burgher of Ghent; whom, perhaps, the reader may have already recognised in the prisoner of Maillotin du Bac.

The silent agony of impotent indignation preyed upon his heart more painfully even than the dark and fearful anticipations of the future, which every circumstance of his situation naturally presented to his mind. Wronged,

oppressed, trampled on; insulted by base and ungenerous men, whose minds were as inferior to his own as their power was superior; he cared less for the death that in all probability awaited him, than for the degradation he already suffered, and for the present and future oppression of his country, his order, and his fellow-creatures, to which his hopes could anticipate no end, and for which his mind could devise no remedy. Whatever expectation Fancy might sometimes, in her wildest dreams, have suggested to his hopes of becoming the liberator of his native land, and the general benefactor of mankind—dreams which he had certainly entertained, though he had never acted upon—they were all extinguished for ever by his arrest, and the events which he knew must follow.

That arrest had taken place, indeed, while engaged in no pursuit which the most jealous tyranny could stigmatize as even seditious. He had visited Namur with no idea of entering France—a country on which the Duke of Burgundy looked with the most suspicious eyes—but simply for the purpose of transacting the mercantile business which his uncle's house carried on with various traders of that city. Unfortunately, however, on his return towards Ghent, he had charged himself with several letters from different citizens of Namur, to persons in his native place. Both cities were at that time equally disaffected; and among the papers with which he had thus burdened himself, several had proved, under the unceremonious inspection of Maillotin du Bac, to be of a nature which might, by a little perversion, be construed into treason. The immediate cause of his first detention also—the fact of having protected a woman, insulted by one of the ruffianly soldiers of the prévôt's band, and of having punished the offender on the spot—he knew well might, by the aid of a little false swearing, a thing almost as common in those days as at present, be made to take the semblance of resistance to legitimate authority, and be brought to prove his connexion with the letters, of which he was simply the bearer, unconscious of their contents.

Under such circumstances nothing was to be expected but an ignominious death; no remedy was to be found, no refuge presented itself. Though his fellow-citizens of Ghent might revolt—though his friends and relations might murmur and complain—revolt and complaint, he

well knew, would only hurry his own fate, and aggravate its circumstances, without proving at all beneficial to his country.

Had he, indeed, seen the slightest prospect of the indignation which his death would cause, wakening the people of his native place to such great, generous, and well-directed exertions as would permanently establish the liberties of the land, there was in his own bosom that mixture of pride, enthusiasm, and patriotism, which would have carried him to the scaffold with a feeling of triumph rather than degradation. But when his eye wandered over all those he knew in Ghent,—nay, in all Flanders,—and sought to find a man fitted by nature and by circumstances to lead and to direct the struggles of the middle and lower classes against the tyranny that then oppressed the land, he could find none in whose character and situation there were not disadvantages which would frustrate his endeavours, or render them more disadvantageous than beneficial to the country. His own death he saw, he felt, would extinguish the last hope of the liberty of Flanders, at least for the time; and neither zeal nor passion could offer any thing, gathered from the prospect before him, to counterbalance, even in the slightest degree, the natural antipathy of man to the awful separation of soul and body. On the contrary, every accessory particular of his fate was calculated to aggravate his distress, by accumulating upon his head indignities and wrongs. He was to be dragged into his native town among grooms and horse-boys, bound with cords like a common thief, paraded through the long and crowded streets in mid-day to the common prison, from whence he was alone to issue to the gibbet or the block.

Such were the subjects of his contemplation—such were the images that thronged before his mind's eye, as, with a burning heart and aching brow, and with a lip that seemed as if some evil angel had breathed upon it all the fire of his own, he lay stretched upon the straw, which was the only bed that his jailer had afforded him.

The dungeon was all in darkness; for, either from carelessness or design, no light had been left with him. But could his face have been seen, notwithstanding the agonizing thoughts that thrilled through his bosom, none of those wild contortions would there have been traced

which affect weaker beings under the like pangs. His hand was pressed sometimes firmly upon his brow, as if to hold the throbbing veins from bursting outright; and sometimes he bit his under lip unconsciously, or shut his teeth hard, striving to prevent the despair which mastered his heart from announcing its dominion by a groan. His eye might have been seen full of keen anguish, and the bright red flushing of his cheek might have told how strongly the body sympathized with the pangs of the mind; but it was all an effort to repress what was passing within, not the weakness of yielding to it. He lay quite still, without one voluntary movement—he suffered not his limbs to writhe—he tossed not to and fro, in the restlessness of agony—but remained quiet, if not tranquil, though full of deep, bitter, burning, voiceless thoughts.

Thus hour passed after hour—for the wings of time, as they fly through the night of despair, are as rapid as when they cut the mid-day sky of joy; thus hour passed after hour, from the time that the brutal prévôt closed the door of the dungeon; and the prisoner could scarcely believe that the castle clock was right, when eleven—midnight—one o'clock, chimed rapidly one after another, each leaving between itself and the last an interval that seemed but of a few minutes.

The single stroke upon the bell—that, echoing through the long, solitary, and now silent passages and courts of the castle, passed unheeded by the sleeping guests, and only told to the watchful warder, or the sentry, that the first hour of a new day was gone,—had scarcely sounded upon the ear of Albert Maurice when a new noise called his attention. It was a harsh, heavy, grating sound, as of some weighty body pushed slowly over a rough surface; and it appeared so near that his eye was immediately turned towards the door of the dungeon, expecting to see it open. It moved not, however: the sound still went on; and he now perceived that it did not come from that side of the dungeon.

The apartment itself was a low roofed, massive chamber, just below the surface of the earth; and seemed to be partly excavated from the rock on which the castle stood, partly formed by the solid foundations of the building itself. One single window, or spiracle, of about twelve inches in diameter, passed upwards through the thick masonry, to the external air beyond:

and one of those short, massive pillars—which we sometimes see in the crypts of very ancient churches—standing in the centre, supported the roof, and apparently the basement of the castle itself; under the tremendous weight of which a fanciful eye might have conceived it to be crushed down; so broad and clumsy were the proportions of the column, in comparison with the rudest Tuscan shaft that ever upheld a portico.

From behind this pillar the sounds that he heard appeared to proceed; and he might have imagined that some human being, confined in a neighbouring chamber, sought to communicate with him through the walls, had it not happened that he had caught the words of the Lord of Hannut in the morning; when, in speaking with Maillotin du Bac, that nobleman had declared that all the dungeons of the castle were untenanted. Still the noise continued, becoming more and more distinct every moment; and, as leaning on his arm upon his couch of straw, he gazed earnestly upon the vacant space on the other side of the vault, a single bright ray of light burst suddenly forth upon the darkness, and, streaming across the open space, painted a long perpendicular pencil of yellow brightness upon the wall close beside him.

Albert Maurice started upon his feet; and perceived, to his surprise, the ray he beheld issued, beyond all doubt, from the body of the pillar itself. The reputed commune of the Lord of Hannut with the beings of another world, his dark and mysterious studies, and the extraordinary fulfilment that many of his astrological predictions were reported to have met with, had often reached the ear of Albert Maurice; but his mind was too enlightened to be credulous, at least, to that extent to which credulity was generally carried in that age. All the fearful circumstances, too, of his new situation, had hitherto blotted out from his mind the rumours he had heard; and when he had entered the castle of Hannut, he looked upon it merely as a place of temporary confinement, from which he was to be led to ignominy and death. Now, however, when he beheld with his own eyes a beam of light, doubly bright from the darkness around, breaking forth from the face of the solid masonry, without any obvious cause or means, all that he had heard rose up before his memory, and without absolutely giving credit to the different tales which he thus remembered, he was certainly startled and sur-

prised; and held his breath, with a feeling of awe and expectation, as he gazed on the spot whence that mysterious ray seemed to proceed.

At the same time, the sound continued, and gradually as it went on the light expanded and grew more and more intense. At length, it became evident that a part of the massy column, about two feet from the ground, was opening in a perpendicular direction, slowly but steadily; and that the light issued from the aperture left by the rolling back, on either side, of two of the large stones which appeared to form the shaft. For the first few minutes, the vacancy did not extend to a hand's breadth in wideness, though to about three feet in height, and nothing could be seen beyond but the light pouring forth from within. A minute more, however, so much increased the aperture, that Albert Maurice could perceive a gauntleted hand, and an arm clothed in steel, turning slowly round in the inside—apparently by the full exertion of its strength—what seemed to be the winch of a wheel. The form to which this hand and arm belonged was for some time concealed behind the stone; but, as the opening became larger, the blocks appeared to move with greater facility, and, at length, rolling back entirely, displayed to the eyes of the prisoner a narrow staircase in the heart of the pillar, with the head, arms, and chest of a powerful man, covered with armour, appearing in the aperture which their removal had left. Beside him stood a complicated piece of machinery; by the agency of which, two of the large stones, forming the shaft of the pillar, were made to revolve upon the pivots of iron, that connected them with the rest of the column; and in a bracket on the stairs was fixed the burning torch, which afforded the light that now poured into the dungeon.

Albert Maurice stood gazing in no small surprise. The feeling of awe—which, however near akin to fear, was not fear—that he had felt on first perceiving the light, was now succeeded by other sensations; and, had there been the slightest resemblance between the personal appearance of the man who stood before him, and that of Maillotin du Bac, or any of his band, he would have supposed that the purpose of the prévôt was to despatch him in prison—an event which not unfrequently took place, in the case of prisoners whose public

execution might be dangerous to the tranquillity of the state.

Totally different, however, in every respect, was the person whom he now beheld; for, though his form could not well be distinguished under the armour by which he was covered, yet that armour itself was a sufficient proof, at least to Albert Maurice, that the stranger was in no way connected with the band of the prévôt. Every plate of his mail was painted of a deep leafy green; and even his helmet, which was without crest or plume, and the visor of which was down, was of the same forest colour. In other respects he seemed a tall, powerful man, formed equally for feats of activity or strength.

Little time was allowed the prisoner for making further observations: for, as soon as the stones had been rolled back as far as their construction permitted, the stranger at once sprang into the dungeon; though the young burgher remarked at the same time that a leap which would have made any other arms clang, with a noise nearly sufficient to waken the whole castle, produced no sound from those of his new visiter.

The mechanical means which he had used to procure an entrance had, at once, as we have before said, banished all superstitious fancies from the mind of Albert Maurice, nor did even his noiseless tread recall them. The young burgher, however, still looked upon the man-at-arms with some feelings of doubt, apprehension, and astonishment; though his own presence in the dungeon was far from seeming to surprise this nocturnal visiter; for, advancing directly towards him, he clasped the arm of the prisoner in his gauntleted hand, saying, in a low voice, "Follow me!"

Albert Maurice paused, and gazed upon the stranger —over whose green armour the flashing red light of the torch cast a strange and extraordinary glare—with a glance of doubt and hesitation; but his irresolution was removed at once, by the stranger demanding, in the same clear and distinct, but low tone, "Can you be worse than you are here?"

"Lead on," he replied; "I follow you."

"Pass through," said the stranger, pointing with his hand to the aperture in the column. Albert Maurice again hesitated; but a moment's thought upon the hopelessness of his situation—the inefficacy of resist-

ance, even if any thing evil were meditated against him—the thought, too, that it were better to die murdered in a prison, than to be exposed a spectacle to the multitude by public execution, mingled with a strong hope that relief was at hand, though he knew not whence that relief might come—made him cast away all doubts; and, stepping over the mass of stone, below the aperture, he found himself in a staircase only sufficiently large to admit the ascent or descent of one person at a time. The secret entrance which it afforded to that dungeon seemed its only object; for, to all appearance, it was carried up no farther through the column; the space above being occupied by the machinery for moving the blocks of stone.

"Descend a few steps," said the stranger, "that I may close the passage." And as soon as he found himself obeyed, he also entered the column; and applying the full strength of his powerful arm to the winch which moved the machinery, he succeeded, in a few minutes, in rolling the heavy blocks which filled up the aperture of the column, so exactly back into their places in the masonry, that not even in the inside could it be seen that they did not form a part of the wall of the staircase. When this was accomplished, he said, in the same brief manner in which he had before spoken, "Go on!" and then followed the prisoner, holding the torch as far before him as possible, to let the other see the way as he descended step by step. After having proceeded for about fifteen or twenty yards, Albert Maurice found his farther progress opposed by a strong oaken door, but it proved unlocked; and having pushed it open by the desire of his conductor, he stepped forth into a small vaulted chamber, not unlike the dungeon he had just left. Various objects, however, which, by the light of another torch that was there burning, he beheld strewed about in different parts of the room, showed him at once that the purposes to which it was applied were very different from those to which the other was appropriated. Several cloaks and gowns, of many kinds, were piled upon a bench close to the door; and across them leaned, with one end resting on the floor, a common pike or reiter's lance, and a large two-handed sword. A barrel of wine, as it seemed, occupied one corner of the apartment; and in the midst was placed a table, on which stood a large

leathern bottle, or *bottiau*, with two or three drinking-horns.

Sitting on a bench at the far end of this table, and on which his head and arms rested, was a man apparently sound asleep. He was armed all but his head, which was covered alone by its own long tangled black hair; but his armour was of a very different kind from that of the stranger who had guided Albert Maurice thither, consisting alone of one of those light suits of body-mail which were called brigandines; and the common use of which, among the lawless soldiers of the day, had acquired for them the name of brigands. The general hue of his whole dress, however, was green, like his companion's, and Albert Maurice was soon led to conceive that he was in the hands of a party of those bold adventurers who had succeeded the schwarz reiters, or black horsemen, and had obtained, from the general colour of their dress, the title of green riders. It is true that the latter had displayed, upon all occasions, a much more generous and noble spirit than their predecessors, whose sole trade was blood and carnage. As they abstained totally from plundering the peasants, and directed their attacks in general against persons who were in some way obnoxious to the better part of the population, the green riders were far from unpopular throughout the country. Many of them were known to show themselves familiarly at village-feasts and merrimakings; and upon the borders of France and Flanders, their general name had been changed, from these circumstances, into that of *Les verts Gallants*, though it seemed that their principal leader was more particularly distinguished by this appellation. Nor was this the only effect of their popularity, which produced for themselves a much more beneficial result, by making both peasant and burgher, and even many of the feudal lords themselves, anxious to connive at the escape of the green riders, whenever they were pursued by very superior bodies of troops.

Into the hands of some one of their parties Albert Maurice now clearly saw that he had fallen; and as the sort of romantic life which they led had caused a thousand stories to be spread concerning them—some strange and extraordinary enough, but none more common than that of their finding access into towns and castles without any visible means,—their connexion with the dwell-

ing which he was just quitting required no explanation to the young citizen.

The moment he had entered the chamber which we have just described, the Vert Gallant, as we shall henceforth term the person who had led Albert Maurice thither, closed the heavy door which cut off the communication with the staircase, and locked and barred it with no small precaution. Advancing towards the table, he shook the slumberer by the shoulder, who, starting up, merely required a sign to place himself in the position of a sentry, at the mouth of a dark passage which entered the other side of the chamber.

"Now, sir burgher," said the Vert Gallant, approaching towards Albert Maurice, "you have penetrated into places which the eye of none of your cast or craft ever beheld before; and, as you have been led thither solely for your benefit and safety, you must take a serious oath, for the security of those who have conferred upon you so great a favour."

"That I will willingly," replied Albert Maurice, "although Heaven only knows whether it may prove a benefit to me or not."

"Rule yourself by my directions," replied the other, "and fear not for the result; but first for the oath." So saying, he unsheathed his sword, and holding up the cross which formed the hilt before the eyes of the young burgher, he added, "Swear by this blessed symbol of our salvation, by your faith in the Saviour who died upon the cross, by your hope for his aid at your utmost need, by all that you hold dear upon the earth and sacred beyond the earth, never to reveal, by word, sign, or token, or in any other manner whatever, any thing that you have seen from the moment that you quitted the dungeon above, or that you may see as I lead you hence."

"Willingly do I swear," replied Albert Maurice, and he pressed the hilt of the sword upon his lips. "Nevertheless," he added, "for the security of all, fair sir, I would rather that, by bandaging my eyes, you should take from me the means of betraying you, even if I would."

"Hast thou no confidence in thine own honour?" demanded the Vert Gallant. "If so, by the Lord I regret that I took the trouble to save so scurvy a clown."

The eye of the prisoner flashed, and his cheek grew

red; but, after a moment's pause, he replied, "Not so. It is not that I doubt my own honour, for I have sworn not to betray you, or to reveal any thing that I may see; and that torture has not yet been invented by the demons who are permitted to rule so much upon our earth, that could tear from me one word in violation of that oath. Nevertheless, sir, I would rather be able to say that I cannot, than that I will not tell, and therefore I proposed the means at which you scoff without cause."

"Thou art right, and I am wrong, stranger," answered the other. "Be it so then. With this scarf I will bind up thine eyes. But first," he added, "take a draught of this wine, for thou wilt have to travel far ere morning."

So saying, he filled one of the horns upon the table to the brim, and presented it to the young burgher, who drank it off. The Vert Gallant himself, however, did not unclose the visor of his helmet, to partake of the beverage he gave to the other. As soon as the young citizen had drained the cup, his guide took the scarf from the bench and bound it over his eyes, saying, with a light laugh, as he did so, "I am clumsy at the work with these gauntlets on, but better have my fingers busy at thy temples, than the hangman's busy at thy neck. Now give me thy hand," he added; "the way is rough, so mind thy footing as we go."

Albert Maurice was now led forward to the mouth of the passage, at which the other adventurer stood; and he then advanced for some way over an uneven pavement, till at length he was told that there were steps to descend. Of these there were about thirty, and he remarked, as he went down, that the air became very close and oppressive. He thought, too, that he heard many voices speaking and laughing beyond; and as he proceeded, it became clear that it was so, for by the time he and his guide had reached the bottom of the descent, the sound of merriment burst clear upon his ear. "Now pause for a moment," said his companion, and at the same time he struck three hard blows with his mailed hand upon what seemed to be a door. All instantly became silent within, and then a single blow upon the wood-work was struck from the other side. It was answered in the same manner, by one stroke more; and in the next moment—after the clattering and grating caused by the turning of more than one key, and by the removing of more than one large bar—the door

was apparently thrown open, and Albert Maurice could tell, by the freer air that he breathed, that he was led forward into some apartment of much larger dimensions than any he had yet seen. No voice was heard; but the sound of moving feet, and seats pushed on one side, as well as the steam of wine and dressed meats, showed clearly that they had now entered some scene of late or present festivity. The person who had conducted him thither soon let go his hand, but at the same time he heard his voice, exclaiming, "Now, unbind his eyes for a few minutes! Have my orders been obeyed?"

While several voices were busily answering this question, by detailing the despatch of a number of messengers, as it seemed, in different directions, and for purposes which Albert Maurice could not gather from what was said, two persons undid the scarf which covered his eyes, and he suddenly found himself in a scene which may need a more detailed description.

The apartment in which he stood, if apartment it could be called, was neither more nor less than an immense cavern, or excavation in the limestone rock, from which, as it bore evidently the traces of human labour, it is probable that at some remote period the stone for constructing one or several large buildings had been hewn out. In height it might be twenty or five-and-twenty feet, and in width it was considerably more; the length was about eighty yards, and the farther end, on one side, was closed by a wooden partition. Overhead the rock was left rough and irregular, but the sides, to very near the top, were perpendicular, and tolerably smooth, while the floor, or rather the ground, had of course been made as level as possible in its original construction, for the purpose of rolling out the blocks of stone with greater facility. Extending down the centre of this spacious apartment was a table, covered with various sorts of food. The viands which it sustained consisted chiefly of immense masses of solid meat, among which, though beef and mutton bore a certain share, yet the stag, the wild boar, and the fallow-deer, with other of the forest tenants, had contributed not a little to make up the entertainment. On either side of this table, which, by-the-way, was itself formed of planks, on which the traces of the saw were much more evident than those of the plane, were ranged an innumerable multitude of benches, stools, and settles

of the same rude description. From these had risen up, as it seemed, on the entrance of the prisoner and his companion, the mixed population of the cavern, consisting of nearly two hundred cavaliers, as sturdy, and, apparently, as veteran as ever mounted horse or drew a sword; and, when the bandage was removed from the eyes of the young citizen, he found that a number of those whose habiliments seemed to point them out as the most distinguished were thronging round the person who had led him thither.

"John and Nicholas have gone to the west," cried one, "to tell the band of St. Bavon to keep beyond Ramilies."—"Adolph of Sluy," cried another, "has tidings by this time that he must remain within the bounds of Liege."—"The little monk too," said an old, white-headed man, of a florid, healthy complexion, which showed that time had hitherto wrestled with him nearly in vain,—"the little monk too, is trotting away on his mule towards Mierdorp, though he complained bitterly of being obliged to set out before the feast was on the table, and has carried away, in his wallet, a roasted hare from the fire, as long as my arm, and a bottle of the old Bonne that we got out of the cellar of Ambly."

"He shall feast well another time for his pains," replied the Vert Gallant, moving towards the head of the table, at which a large arm-chair stood vacant,—"he shall feast well another time for his pains, good Matthew; but we must make this stranger taste of our hospitality while the horses are saddling without. Sit down, sir citizen," he added, turning to Albert Maurice, "sit down, and refresh yourself before you go;" and he pointed to a vacant seat by his side.

"I thank you, sir," replied the young citizen; "but the grief I have undergone, and the anxieties I have suffered, have dulled the edge of appetite with me more than the banquet of a prince could have done; and I would fain see myself once more upon my road to Ghent, if such be the fate intended for me."

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed the old man whom we have before noticed. "See what frail things these burghers are, that a little anxiety and fear should take away their appetite; but thou wilt drink, good friend, if thou wilt not eat. Here, merry men all, fill to the brim, and drink with me to our noble leader,—'Here's to the Vert Gallant of Hannut!'"

The proposal was like an electric shock to all. Each man started on his feet, and with loud voice and overflowing cup, drank, "To the Vert Gallant of Hannut! and may the sword soon restore him to what the sword took from him!"

"Thank you, my friends, thank you," replied the Vert Gallant, as soon as their acclamation had subsided, —"I drink to you all, with many thanks," and so saying, he raised the visor of his helmet sufficiently to allow himself to bring the cup to his lip. The eye of the young burgher fixed eagerly upon him, anxious, as may be well supposed, to behold the countenance of a man holding such an extraordinary station. What was his surprise, however, when the small degree in which the leader of the green riders suffered his face to appear, exposed to view the countenance of a negro.

CHAPTER X.

An involuntary exclamation of astonishment burst from the lips of Albert Maurice, and the Vert Gallant instantly closed his helmet.

"Now, sir citizen," he said, without noticing the other's surprise, "we will once more forward on our way. Some one bind his eyes again; and you, good Matthew, lend me your ear for a moment. Mark well," he said, speaking in a lower voice,—"mark well that all the precautions are taken which I ordered. Be sure the tracks of the horses' feet, for more than a mile, be completely effaced. Roll the large stones down, as I told you, over the mouth, and let not a man show his head during the whole day. If, notwithstanding all, you should be discovered, and the fools will rush upon their fate, send round fifty men by the back of the rock, and, on your life, let not one of the band escape. I say not slay them: take every man to mercy that is willing; but suffer not one living man to pass the bounds of the forest if they once discover you. If, however, they miss the track entirely, as doubtless they will, then, should I not see you before to-morrow night, pick me out fifty of the best riders, and the quickest-handed men;

let their horses be saddled, and not a break in their mail; for I do not purpose that this prévôt should hie him back to Brussels without being met withal."

By the time he had given these directions, the scarf was once more bound round the eyes of Albert Maurice, and he was again led forward by the hand, apparently passing through several halls and passages. In one instance, the peculiar smell of horses, and the various sounds that he heard, convinced him that he was going through a stable; and, in a few minutes after, receiving a caution to walk carefully, he was guided down a steep descent, at the end of which the free open air blew cool upon his cheek. The bandage was not removed, however, for some moments, though by feeling the grass and withered leaves beneath his feet, he discovered that he was once more under the boughs of the forest.

At length the voice of him who had been his conductor throughout desired him to halt, and uncover his eyes, which he accordingly did, and found himself, as he expected, in the deepest part of the wood.

"Now follow me on," sir citizen, said the Vert Gallant, "and as we go, I will tell you how you must conduct yourself. Make your way straight to Mierdorp, where you will arrive probably in the gray of the dawn. As you are going into the village, you will be joined by a certain monk, to whom you will say, 'Good morrow, Father Barnabas,' and he will immediately conduct you on your road towards Namur. Halt with him at the village where you were first arrested. Speak with the syndic, or deacon, or any other officer of the place, and get together all the written testimony you can concerning the cause of your arrest; then return to Ghent, if you will. It may be that no accuser ever will appear against you, but if there should, boldly appeal to the Princess Mary, who is left behind by her father at Ghent. State the real circumstances which caused your arrest at the Gembloux, and call upon your accuser to bring forward any proofs against you. But mark well, and remember, walk not late by night. Go not forth into the streets alone. Always have such friends and companions about you as may witness your arrest, and second your appeal to the pri[illegible]. For there are such things, sir citizen, as deaths i[illegible]son without judgment."

"I shall [illegible]ember with gratitude, sir," replied the young burgh[illegible] all that you have been pleased to say,

and all that you have done in my behalf. But on one point I must needs think you mistake. If I know where I am rightly, we are full sixteen miles from Mierdorp,—a distance which would take four good hours to walk. The castle clock has just struck three, so that it may be broad day, and not merely dawn, before I can reach that place."

"Fear not, fear not," replied the stranger, "you shall have the means of reaching it in time; but follow me quick, for the hours wear." Thus saying, he strode on through the trees and brushwood, pursuing a path, which, though totally invisible to the eyes of his companion, he seemed to tread with the most perfect certainty. Sometimes the occasional underwood appeared to cover it over entirely; and often the sweeping boughs of the higher trees drooped across it, and dashed the night-dew upon the clothes of the travellers, as they pushed through them; but still the Vert Gallant led on. In about ten minutes, the glancing rays of the sinking moon, seen shining through the leaves before them, showed that they were coming to some more open ground; and the next moment they stood upon the principal road which traversed the forest.

By the side of the highway, with an ordinary groom holding the bridle, stood a strong, bony horse; and the only further words that were spoken, were, "The road lies straight before you to the west; mount, and God speed you. Give the horse to the monk when you are in safety."

"A thousand thanks and blessings on your head!" replied the young burgher; and springing with easy grace into the saddle, he struck the horse with his heel, and darted off towards Mierdorp.

"A likely cavalier as ever I saw!" exclaimed the Vert Gallant. "Now, to cover, to cover!" he added, turning to the groom, and once more plunged into the forest.

In the mean while Albert Maurice rode on; and with his personal adventures we shall now be compelled to proceed for some way, leaving the other characters for fate to play with as she lists, till we have an opportunity of resuming their history also.

The horse that bore the young burgher, though not the most showy that ever underwent the saddle, proved strong, swift, and willing; and as it is probably impos-

sible for a man just liberated from prison, with the first sense of recovered freedom fresh upon him, to ride slowly, Albert Maurice dashed on for some way at full speed. His mind had adopted, without a moment's doubt or hesitation, the plan which had been pointed out to him by the leader of the adventurers, as the very best which, under his present circumstances, he could pursue; and this conviction,—together with the proofs he had already received that the wishes of the Vert Gallant were friendly and generous towards himself, and the intimate knowledge which his deliverer had displayed of his affairs,—made him resolve to follow implicitly his directions. Although this resolution was brought about by the mental operation of a single moment, it is not to be supposed that the various events which had befallen him since entering the castle of Hannut had not produced on his mind all those effects of wonder, surprise, and doubt which they might naturally be expected to cause in the bosom of any person so circumstanced.

There were a thousand things that he could not in any way account for, and which we shall not attempt to account for either. The interest which his deliverer had taken in his fate; the means by which he had acquired such an exact knowledge of his situation; the existence of so large a band of free companions, notwithstanding all the efforts which the Duke of Burgundy had directed against them, were all matters of astonishment. He had felt, however, during his short intercourse with the green riders, that neither the time, the place, nor the circumstances admitted of any inquiry upon the subject; and with a prompt decision, which was one great trait in his character, while he took advantage of the means of escape offered to him, he had suppressed as far as possible every word which might have betrayed surprise or curiosity. As he rode on, however, he pondered on all that had happened; and he doubted not, that, now that he was at liberty to seek and collect the proofs of his innocence, he should find little difficulty in clearing himself from any absolute crime, if his cause were submitted to a regular tribunal. Unfortunately, this did not always occur. In most of the continental states the will of the prince was law; and too often the same absolute jurisdiction was exercised by his officers. This was especially the case in respect to Maillotin du Bac, who, in one morning, had

been known to arrest and hang thirty persons, without any form of trial or judicial investigation.

Nevertheless, all these circumstances seemed to have been fully considered by the Vert Gallant; and the means he had pointed out of an appeal to the Princess Mary, in case of unjust persecution, were, as the young burgher well knew, the only ones that could prove efficacious.

So well had the distance and the horse's speed been calculated, that, at about two miles from Mierdorp, that undefinable gray tint, which can scarcely be called light, but is the first approach towards it, began to spread upwards over the eastern sky; and by the time that Albert Maurice emerged from the forest of Hannut, which then extended to within a mile of the village, the air was all rosy with the dawn of day. Just as he was issuing forth from the woodland, he perceived before him a stout, short, round figure, covered with a long gray gown, the cowl or hood of which was thrown back upon his shoulders, leaving a polished bald head to shine uncovered in the rays of the morning; and the young fugitive paused to examine the person whom he had by this time nearly overtaken.

The monk, for so he appeared to be, was mounted on a stout, fat mule, whose gray skin, and sleek, rotund limbs, gave him a ridiculous likeness to his rider, which was increased by a sort of vacant sentimentality that appeared in the round face of the monk, and the occasional slow raising and dropping of one of the mule's ears, in a manner which bears no other epithet but that of *lack-a-daisical*.

According to the instructions he had received, the young burgher immediately rode up to the monk, and addressed him with the "Good morrow, Father Barnabas," which he had been directed to employ.

"Good morrow, my son," replied the monk; "though unhappily for me, sinner that I am, my patron saint is a less distinguished one than him whose name you give me; I am called Father Charles, not Father Barnabas."

As he thus spoke he looked up in the young traveller's face with an air of flat unmeaningness, which would at once have convinced Albert Maurice that he was mistaken in the person, had he not discovered a small ray of more intellectual expression beam the next moment through the dull, gray eye of the monk, while some-

thing curled, and just curled, the corners of his mouth with what did not deserve the name of a smile, and yet was far too faint for a grin.

"Well," said he, eying him keenly, "if your name be not Barnabas, good father, I will give you good morrow once more, and ride on."

"Good morrow, my son," replied the monk, with the same demure smile; and Albert Maurice, to be as good as his word, put his horse into a trot, in order to make the best of his way towards Mierdorp, which was lying in the fresh, sweet light of morning, at the distance of about three-quarters of a mile before him.—To his surprise, however, the monk's mule, without any apparent effort of its rider, the moment he quickened his horse's pace, put itself into one of those long, easy ambles for which mules are famous, and without difficulty carried its master on by his side.

"You are in haste, my son," said the monk: "whither away so fast?"

"I go to seek Father Barnabas," replied the young burgher, somewhat provoked, but yet half-laughing at the quiet merriment of the monk's countenance as he rode along beside him on his mule, with every limb as round as if he had been formed out of a series of pumpkins.

"Well, well," answered the monk, "perhaps I may aid you in your search; but what wouldst thou with Father Barnabas, when thou hast found him? Suppose I were Father Barnabas now, what wouldst thou say to me?"

"I would say nothing," replied Albert Maurice; "but—let us on our way."

"So be it, then," replied the other; "but one thing, good brother, it does not become me to go jaunting over the country with profane laymen; therefore if we are to journey forward together, you must don the frock, and draw the hood over your head, to hide that curly black hair. So turn your horse's bridle-rein before we get into the village, and behind those old hawthorn bushes, I will see whether my wallet does not contain the wherewithal to make thee as good a monk as myself."

As it now became sufficiently evident to the young citizen that he was not deceived in the person whom he had addressed, he acquiesced in his proposal; and turn-

ing down a little lane to their right-hand, they dismounted from their beasts behind a small thick clump of aged thorns, and the monk soon produced, from a large leathern wallet which he carried behind him, a gray gown, exactly similar to his own, which completely covered and concealed the handsome form of the young citizen. The cowl having been drawn entirely over his head, and the frock bound round his middle by a rope, they once more mounted; and pursuing their way together, soon found means to turn the conversation to the direct object which they had in view, with which it appeared the monk was fully acquainted.

The ice having been once broken, Albert Maurice found his companion a shrewd, intelligent man, with a strong touch of roguish humour, which, though partly concealed under an affectation of stolidity, had grown into such a habit of jesting, that it seemed scarcely possible to ascertain when he was serious, and when he was not. This, however, might be, in some degree, assumed; for it is wonderful how often deep feelings and deep designs, intense affection, towering ambition, and even egregious cunning itself, attempt to cover themselves over by different shades of playful gayety, knowing that the profundity of a deep stream is often hidden by the light ripple on its surface.

However that might be, his companion was any thing but wanting in sense, and proved of the greatest assistance to the young citizen of Ghent, by his keen foresight and knowledge of the world.

With his co-operation Albert Maurice, at the little town of Gembloux, at which he had been arrested by Maillotin du Bac, obtained full and sufficient evidence, written down by the magistrate of the place, to prove that the first squabble between himself and the prévôt had arisen in a wanton aggression committed by one of the soldiers of the latter; and that before that officer had opened any of the papers in his possession, he had sworn, with a horrible oath, that for striking his follower, he would hang him over the gates of Ghent. All this was attested in due form; and satisfied that half the dangers of his situation were gone, Albert Maurice gladly turned his horse's head towards his native place. The monk still accompanied him, saying that he had orders not to leave him till he was safe within the walls

of Ghent; "seeing that you are such a sweet, innocent lamb," he added, "that you are not to be trusted among the wolves of this world alone."

Their journey passed over, however, without either danger or difficulty; for though at Gembloux Albert Maurice had laid aside the frock, as his very inquiries would of course have made his person known, he had resumed it, by the monk's desire, as soon as they had quitted that town; and the garb procured them a good reception in all the places at which they paused upon the road.

As they approached Ghent, Father Barnabas thought fit to take new precautions; and requested his young companion to make use of the mule which he had hitherto ridden himself, while he mounted the horse. He also drew his own cowl far over his head; nor were these steps in vain, as they very soon had occasion to experience.

They reached the gates of Ghent towards sunset, on a fine clear evening, and passed through many a group of peasantry, returning from the market in the city, to their rural occupations. On these the monk showered his benedictions very liberally; but Albert Maurice remarked, that as they approached a small party of soldiers near the gate, his companion assumed an air of military erectness, and caused his horse to prance and curvet like a war-steed. Perhaps, had he noticed what the keen eye of the monk had instantly perceived, that two of the soldiers were examining them as they came up with more than ordinary care, he might have guessed that the object of all this parade of horsemanship was to draw attention upon himself—as a skilful conjurer forces those to whom he offers the cards to take the very one he wishes, without their being conscious of his doing so.

"Ventre Saint Gris!" cried one of the soldiers to the other, as they came near. "It must be him! That is no monk, Jenkin!—Pardi! I will see, however.—Father, your cowl is awry!" he added, laying his hand upon the monk's bridle-rein, and snatching at his hood as if for the sake of an insolent joke. The cowl instantly fell back under his hand, exposing the fat bald head of the friar; and the soldier, with a broad laugh, retired, disappointed, among his companions, suffering

the young citizen, who, on the still, quiet mule, had escaped without observation, to proceed with the monk to the dwelling of good Martin Fruse, which they reached without further annoyance or interruption

CHAPTER XI.

Although the soldiers that Albert Maurice and his companion had passed at the gate, with the usual reckless gayety of their profession, had been found laughing lightly, and jesting with each other, yet it soon became evident to the eyes of the travellers, as they passed onward through the long irregular streets of the city, that something had occurred to affect the population of Ghent in an unusual manner.

Scarce a soul was seen abroad; and there was a sort of boding calmness in the aspect of the whole place, as they rode on, which taught them to expect important tidings of some kind from the first friend they should meet. The misty evening sunshine streamed down the far perspective of the streets, casting long and defined shadows from the fountains and the crosses, and the houses, that every here and there obtruded their insolent gables beyond the regular line of the other buildings; but no lively groups were seen amusing themselves at the corners, or by the canals; no sober citizens sitting out before their doors, in all the rich and imposing colours of Flemish costume, to enjoy the cool tranquillity of the evening, after the noise, and the bustle, and the heat of an active summer's day. One or two persons, indeed, might be observed with their heads close together, and the important forefinger laid with all the energy of demonstration in the palm of the other hand, while the party gossiped eagerly over some great event, each one fancying himself fit to lead hosts and to govern kingdoms; and every now and then some rapid figure, with consequence in all its steps, was remarked flitting from house to house, the receptacle and carrier of all the rumours of the day.

Though in one of the last-named class of personages whom Albert Maurice met as he advanced he recog-

nised an acquaintance, yet, for many reasons, he only drew the cowl more completely over his face; and, secure in the concealment of the monk's frock that covered him, he rode on till he reached the dwelling of his uncle Martin Fruse, which he judged to be a more secure asylum than his own, till such time as his resolutions were taken and his plans arranged.

The dwelling of the worthy burgher, though occupying no inconsiderable part of one of the principal streets, had its private entrance in a narrower one branching to the south-west; and the tall houses on either hand, acting as complete screens between the portal and the setting sun, gave at least an hour's additional darkness to the hue of evening.

So deep, indeed, was the gloom, and so completely did the friar's gown conceal the person of Albert Maurice, that one of his uncle's oldest servants, who was standing in the entrance, did not in any degree recognise his young master, though it was his frequent boast that he had borne the young citizen—the pink of the youth of Ghent—upon his knee a thousand times when he was no higher than an ell-wand. Even the familiar stride with which Albert Maurice entered the long dark passage as soon as he had dismounted from his mule did not undeceive him; and he ran forward into the large sitting-room, which lay at the end of the vestibule, announcing that two monks, somewhat of the boldest, had just alighted at the door.

He was followed straight into the apartment of Martin Fruse by that worthy citizen's nephew, who immediately found himself in the midst of half a dozen of the richest burghers, enjoying an hour of social converse with their wealthy neighbour before they retired to their early rest. It would seem to belong more to the antiquary than to the historian to describe the appearance of the chamber, or the dress of the personages who were seated on benches around it; and it may suffice to say, that the furred gowns and gold chains which decorated the meeting sufficiently evinced the municipal dignity of the guests.

At the moment of his nephew's entrance, Martin Fruse was upon his feet, following around a serving-boy, who, with a small silver cup, and flask of the same metal, was distributing to each of the burghers a modicum of a liquor, now, alas! too common, but which was then

lately invented, and was known—from the many marvellous qualities attributed to it—by the name of *eau de vie*.

"Take but one small portion," said the worthy citizen to one of his companions, who made some difficulty; "not more than a common spoonful. Do not the best leeches in Europe recommend it as a sovereign cure for all diseases, and a preservation against bad air? It warms the stomach, strengthens the bones, clears the head, and promotes all the functions. And, truly, these are sad and troublous times, wherein cordials are necessary, and every man requires such consolation as he can find. Alack, and a well-a-day! who would have thought—"

But the speech of good Martin Fruse was brought to a sudden conclusion by the entrance of his man, announcing the coming of the two monks; which notice was scarcely given when Albert Maurice himself appeared. Before entering, the young citizen had paused one moment to cast off the friar's gown, on account of the strange voices he heard as he advanced along the passage, and he now showed himself in his usual travelling dress, though his apparel was somewhat disarranged, and he appeared without cap or bonnet.

"Welcome, welcome, my fair nephew!" cried Martin Fruse, who looked upon Albert with no small pride and deference. "Sirs, here is my nephew Albert, come at a lucky hour to give us his good counsel and assistance in the strange and momentous circumstances in which we are placed."

"Welcome, most welcome, good Master Maurice!" cried a number of voices at once. "Welcome, most welcome!" and the young traveller, instantly surrounded by his fellow-citizens, was eagerly congratulated on his return, which had apparently been delayed longer than they had expected or had wished. At the same time, the often-repeated words, "Perilous times—extraordinary circumstances—dangers to the state—anxious expectations," and a number of similar expressions, showed him that the opinion he had formed, from the appearance of the town as he passed through, was perfectly correct, and that some events of general and deep importance had taken place.

"I see," he said, in reply, after having answered their first salutations,—"I see that something must have occurred with which I am unacquainted. Re-

member, my good friends, that I have been absent from the city for some weeks; and for the last four or five days I have been in places where I was not likely to hear any public tidings."

"What!" cried one, "have you not heard the news?—that the duke has been beaten near the lake of Neufchatel, and all the forces with which he was besieging Morat have been killed or taken?"

"How!" exclaimed another, "have you not heard that the Duke of Lorrain is advancing towards Flanders with all speed?"

"Some say he will be at Ghent in a week," cried a third.

"But the worst news of all," said a fourth, in a solemn and mysterious tone, "is, that a squire, who arrived at the palace last night, saw the duke stricken from his horse by a Swiss giant with a two-handed sword; and, according to all accounts, he never rose again."

"Good God! is it possible!" exclaimed Albert Maurice, as all these baleful tidings poured in at once upon his ear, with a rapidity which afforded him scarcely an opportunity of estimating the truth of each as he received it, and left him no other feeling for the time than pain at the ocean of misfortunes which had overwhelmed his country—though he looked upon the prince, who had immediately suffered, as a despot, and upon the nobles, who in general bore the brunt of battle or defeat, as a number of petty tyrants more insupportable than one great one. "Good God! is it possible!" he exclaimed: "but are you sure, my friends," he continued, after a moment's pause, "that all this news is true? Rumour is apt to exaggerate, and increases evil tidings tenfold, where she only doubles good news. Are these reports quite sure?"

"Oh! they are beyond all doubt," replied one of the merchants, with a slight curl of the lip. "The Lord of Imbercourt, who was on his march to join the army, when he received couriers bearing these evil tidings, returned with his spears in all haste to Ghent, to guard against any disturbance, as he said, and to keep the rebellious commons under the rule of law."

The man who spoke this was a small, dark, insignificant-looking person, whose figure would not have attracted a moment's attention, and whose face might have equally passed without notice, had not the keen

sparkling light of two clear black eyes, which seemed to wander constantly about in search of other people's thoughts, given at least some warning that there was a subtle, active, and intriguing soul concealed within that diminutive and unprepossessing form. His name was Ganay. By profession he was a druggist; and the chief, in that city, of a trade which differed considerably from that of druggist in the present day, and which was one of no small importance in a great manufacturing town like Ghent, where all the different fabrics required, more or less, some of those ingredients which he imported from foreign countries. In pronouncing the last words, "to keep the rebellious commons under the rule of law," the druggist fixed his keen black eyes upon the face of Albert Maurice with an expression of inquiring eagerness, partly proceeding from an anxious desire to see into the heart of the young citizen, whose character the other fully estimated, partly from a design to lead him —by showing him what was expected from him—to say something which might discover his views and feelings.

He was deceived, however: the very certainty that his words were to be marked put the young citizen upon his guard; and, conscious that there were mighty events gathering round—that his own situation was precarious —and that of his country still more so, he felt the necessity of obtaining perfect certainty with regard to the facts, and of indulging deep reflection in regard to the consequences, before he committed himself in the irretrievable manner which is sometimes effected by a single word.

"Ha!" he exclaimed; "ha! did he say so?"—and he was about to drop the dangerous part of the subject, by some common observation, when another of the burghers changed the immediate topic of conversation.

"But there is more news still, good Master Albert Maurice," exclaimed a little fat merchant, whose face expressed all that extravagant desire of wondering, and of exciting wonder, which goes greatly to form the character of a newsmonger; "but there is more news still, which you will be delighted to hear, as a good citizen, and a friend to honest men. That pitiful, prying, blood-thirsty tyrant, Maillotin du Bac, was brought into the town to-day in a litter, beaten so sorely, that they say there is not a piece of his skin so big as a

Florence crown that is not both black and blue. Faith, I wonder that the honest men of the wood did not hang him to one of their own trees."

"Ha!" again exclaimed Albert Maurice, but in a tone far more raised with surprise than before, "how did he meet with such a mishap? He boasted that he would not leave a *routier*, or a free companion, in the land."

A low chuckle just behind him, as he pronounced these words, recalled suddenly to his memory that he had been followed into the room by the monk called Father Barnabas; and, congratulating himself that he had suffered not a syllable to escape his lips that might commit him in any degree, he turned towards the companion of his journey, who, in the haste and confusion with which all these tidings had been poured forth upon him, had been forgotten by himself and overlooked by the others.

A few sentences in explanation of his appearance, and in general reference to great services received from him on the road, instantly called upon Father Barnabas the good-humoured civilities and attention of Martin Fruse, and might have turned the conversation to other matters, had not the monk himself seemed determined to hear more of the drubbing which had been bestowed upon Maillotin du Bac.

"Verily, poor gentleman," he exclaimed, in a tone in which the merriment so far predominated over the commiseration, as to render it much more like the voice of malice than of pity; "verily, poor gentleman, he must be in a sad case. How met he with such a terrible accident?"

"Why, father, you shall hear," replied the newsmonger, eager to disburden his wallet of information upon a new ear; "what I am going to tell you is quite true, I can assure you, for my maid Margaret's sister is going to be married to one of the soldiers of the prévôt's band. It seems that they had searched the forest of Hannut all day in vain, for a body of the green riders who had taken refuge there, and also for a prisoner who had made his escape; and towards night they were making for Hal, because they would not go back to Hannut, as the prévôt had some quarrel with the chatelain, when suddenly, in the little wood, near Braine-la-Leud, they were met by a party of fifty free companions, who drew up right across their way. The captain, who, they say, was the famous Vert Gallant

of Hannut himself, singled out the prévôt, and at the very first charge of the two bands brought him to the ground with his lance. Du Bac, however, was not hurt, and at first refused to yield; but the Vert Gallant cudgelled him with the staff of his lance, till there was not a piece of his armour would hold together. He would not kill him, it seems; and when the whole of the band were dispersed, which they were in five minutes, with the exception of five or six who were taken prisoners, the Vert Gallant struck off the prévôt's spurs with his axe, and, telling him that he was a false traitor, and no true knight, sent him back to Ghent, with all the others who had been taken."

While the burgher was detailing these particulars, the small gray roguish eyes of the monk stole from time to time a glance at the face of Albert Maurice, with an expression of merriment, triumph, and malice, all mingled intimately together, but subdued into a look of quiet fun, which elicited a smile from the lip of the young citizen, though the tale he had just heard furnished him with matter for more serious reflection. The eyes of the druggist also fixed upon him, while the story of the prévôt's discomfiture was told by their companion; and the smile which he saw play upon the face of the young burgher seemed to furnish him with information of what was passing in the mind within, sufficient at least for his own purposes; for from that moment he appeared to pay little further attention to the subject before them, otherwise than by mingling casually in the conversation that succeeded.

That conversation became soon of a rambling and desultory nature, wandering round the great political events of the day, the fate of their country, the state of the city itself, and the future prospects of the land, without, however, approaching so near to the dangerous matter which was probably in the heart of every one, as to call forth words that could not be retracted. In fact, each person present felt burdened by great but ill-arranged thoughts; and those who saw most deeply into the abyss before them were the least inclined to venture their opinions ere they heard those of others.

With that sort of intuitive perception which some men have of what is passing in the breasts of those around them, Albert Maurice, without the slightest exertion of cunning or shrewdness—without one effort to

draw forth the thoughts of those by whom he was surrounded—comprehended clearly the peculiar modifications under which each one present was revolving in his own mind what advantages might be derived from—what opportunities might be afforded by—the discomfiture and death of Charles the Bold, for recovering those immunities and privileges which that prince had wrung from Ghent, after they had been too often abused by her citizens. His first thought had been of the same nature also: but the mention of Maillotin du Bac had suddenly recalled to his mind his own particular circumstances and situation; and it must be confessed, that, for a few minutes, it was entirely directed to the consideration of how greatly his own personal safety might be ensured by the events, the news of which had reached Ghent during his absence.

The moment after, however, he upbraided himself for his selfishness; and, casting all individual considerations away, he determined to bend the whole energies of his mind to reap, from the circumstances of the times, the greatest possible degree of benefit for his native city. As he pondered over it, the old aspirations of his soul revived. Not only Ghent, he thought, might be benefited, not only Ghent might be freed, but the whole of Flanders might acquire a degree of liberty she had never known. Still, as he reflected, the image thus presented to his mind increased, and, like the cloud of smoke in the eastern fable, which, rolling forth from the mouth of the small vase, gradually condensed into the form of an enormous giant, the thoughts which at first had referred alone to his personal safety enlarged in object, and grew defined in purpose.

The whole continent at that time groaned under the oppression of the feudal system, decayed, corrupted, and abused; and as Albert Maurice mused, he fancied that the freedom of Ghent and Flanders, once established, might afford an example to France, to Europe, to the world. The trampled serf, the enchained bondsman, the oppressed citizen, might throw off the weary yoke under which they had laboured for ages: the rights of every human being might become generally recognised over the whole surface of the globe; and broken chains and acclamations of joy, the song of freedom and the shout of triumph, presented themselves in hurried visions to his imagination, while patriotism still represented a

liberated world hailing his native land as the champion of the liberty of earth.

Such thoughts rendered him silent and abstracted, and as every one else felt a degree of painful restraint, after lingering some time, the various guests of Martin Fruse rose to return to their dwellings. Although it was now night, several of them, before they set foot within their own homes, called upon different neighbours in their way, just to tell them, as they said, that Master Albert Maurice was returned to Ghent. None knew why, but yet this information seemed a piece of important news to all. By the sway which great natural genius and energy insensibly acquire over the minds of men, Albert Maurice, without ever attempting to force himself into prominent situations, without effort or exertions of any kind, had taught the whole people of the city of Ghent to look to him for extraordinary events; and thus each man who heard of his return generally stole forth to tell it to his next-door neighbour, who again told it to a third. The gossip and the newsmonger gave it forth liberally to others like themselves; so that by a very early hour the next morning the return of Albert Maurice, with a variety of falsehoods and absurdities grafted thereon by the imaginations of the retailers, was generally known, not only to those who were personally acquainted with him, but to a number of others who had never seen him in their lives.

CHAPTER XII.

THE appetite for news is like the appetite for every other thing, stimulated by a small portion of food; and the various unsatisfactory reports which had reached Ghent during the day made her good citizens devour the tidings of Albert Maurice's return with no small greediness.

In the mean while, the young merchant communicated to his uncle, immediately after the departure of the guests, that, from various circumstances, of which he would afterward inform him, he judged it not expedient

to return to his own house for the time being. He prayed him, therefore, to allow him to occupy, for a short space, the apartments which had been appropriated to him during his youth, in the dwelling where he then was; to which request—as his nephew had originally taken up a separate establishment much against his wishes—Martin Fruse consented with no small joy, and proposed that the monk, who still remained, should sleep in the little gray chamber over the warehouse.

"Nay, nay," replied Father Barnabas, when he heard the proposal,—"nay, nay, dearly beloved brother Martin, no gray chamber for me; by my faith, I must be betaking myself early to-morrow to my own green chamber, and, in the mean time, I shall pass the night with a friend of mine in the city, in pious exercises and devout exclamations."

Whether these pious exercises and devout exclamations might not very likely be the rapid circulation of the flagon, and many a jovial bacchanalian song, there may be some reason to doubt. At all events, Albert Maurice had a vague suspicion that it was so; and after pressing the monk to stay, as much as hospitality required, he ceased his opposition to his departure, at the same time putting a purse of twenty golden crowns into his hand.

The monk gazed for a moment upon the little leathern bag, whose weight, as it sank into his palm, seemed to convey to him a full idea of its value; and then raising his merry gray eyes to the face of his travelling companion, he replied, "This is great nonsense, my son, quite unnecessary, I assure you; and indeed I cannot accept it, except upon one condition."

"What is that, my good father?" demanded the young burgher, supposing that the monk was about to affect some notable piece of disinterestedness.

"Merely that you will promise me, my son," replied Father Barnabas, "that in case you should ever hereafter meet with a certain friend of ours, whom some people call the Vert Gallant of Hannut, you will be as silent as the dead about ever having given a leathern purse to poor Father Barnabas, as he may well ask, What is the use of a purse to a holy brother, who vows never to have any money to put into it? Do you understand me, my son?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," replied Albert Maurice; "and promise you with all my heart never to mention it."

"So be it then," rejoined the monk, "and benedicite; I shall take the horse and the mule out of the stable, and speed upon my way."

As soon as the monk was gone, Albert Maurice explained to his uncle, as briefly as possible, all that had occurred to him during his absence from Ghent; and the distress, agitation, and terror of the worthy burgher, at every stage of his nephew's story, were beyond all description. "Alack, and a well-a-day! my poor boy," he cried,—"alack, and a well-a-day! I thought what all these travellings would come to, sooner or later. Good Lord! Good Lord! why should men travel at all? In my young days I never set my foot three leagues out of Ghent; and the first time I ever was seduced to do so, I was caught by robbers in that cursed wood of Hannut, and was obliged to sleep a whole night upon the cold damp ground."

The young citizen calmed his uncle's agitation as much as possible, and then proceeded to consult with him as to the best means they could adopt, in case that Maillotin du Bac should recover from the drubbing he had received, and pursue, as he doubtless would, his purpose against Albert Maurice. In some things, Martin Fruse was not deficient in shrewdness; and he instantly saw the advantages that would be gained by a personal application to the princess, if his nephew were again arrested.

"If," said he, "we still had our old laws, I should have said at once, appeal to the eschevins, because, as we used to elect them ourselves, we should have had justice at least, if not favour. But now that the twenty-six, from the *grand bailli* down to the last secretary, are all named by the creatures of the duke, this Maillotin du Bac gets them to warrant every thing he does, while the princess, who is kind and generous, will be sure to judge in your favour, especially when she sees the papers that prove you were first arrested for taking part with a woman; and her council, who have nothing to do with the prévôt, will take care not to thwart her, who will one day be their mistress."

It was consequently determined, after some further discussion, to follow the line of conduct suggested by

the leader of the adventurers. Such precautions as were necessary to ensure against any of those secret proceedings, which sometimes made clean conveyance with an obnoxious person, before any of his friends were aware, were then concerted between Albert Maurice and his uncle; and the young citizen, pleading fatigue, retired to the apartments that he had occupied as a boy.

There was something in the aspect of the chamber, the quaint old tapestry, with the eyes of many of the figures shot through by the arrows which he used to direct against them in the wanton sport of childhood,—the table notched with the boy's unceasing knife,—the well-remembered bed, in which had been dreamed many of the pleasant dreams of early years; there was something in the aspect of the whole that called up the peaceful past, and contrasted itself almost painfully with the present. Setting down the lamp which he bore in his hand, Albert Maurice cast himself on a seat, and gazing round the apartment, while the thousand memories of every well known object spoke to his heart with the sweet murmuring voice of the past; and while all the perils and anxieties of his actual situation,—the imminent danger from which he had just escaped,—the menacing fate which still hung over his head,—and the fierce struggle in which he was likely to be engaged,—pressed for present attention, he could not help exclaiming, "Oh, boyhood! happy, happy boyhood! must thou never, never come again!"

The busy and usurping present, however, soon took full possession of his thoughts; and, casting from him all cares for the individual danger which threatened himself, he applied his whole mind to consider the probable fate of his country. If the Duke of Burgundy were really dead, he saw, and had long foreseen, that great and extraordinary changes must take place. He knew that there was hardly a town throughout all Flanders, Holland, or Hainault which was not ready to rise in arms, to recover some privilege wrested from its inhabtants,—to break some chain with which they had all been enthralled. He felt, too, and it was a proud consciousness, that he, and he alone throughout the whole land, was capable of wielding that mighty engine, a roused-up multitude, for the great purpose to which it can only be properly applied,—the benefit and the hap-

piness of the whole. This consciousness arose from two circumstances,—a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the general characters of the principal leading men in the various towns of Flanders, together with a knowledge that each was individually selfish or weak, full of wild and unfeasible schemes, or absorbed in narrow personal desires; and, in the second place, from the internal perception of immense powers of mind, strengthened and supported by great corporeal vigour and activity.

Such qualities were not, indeed, all that was required to carry mighty schemes to a successful result, especially where they were to be founded on the consent and support of the vain and wilful multitude. But Albert Maurice had, on several occasions, tried his powers of persuading the crowd, and his ready eloquence had never failed to lead, to convince, to command. Indeed, till the present moment, he had felt almost fearful—surrounded, as he knew himself to be, by watchful and jealous eyes—of the immense popular power that he was aware he could exert. But now, as he paused and considered the probable events about to take place, he felt a triumphant security in his own talents, and prepared to step forward, and secure a popular form of government, for Ghent at least, if the reins had really fallen from the hand that lately held them. His first thoughts, indeed, were all turned towards the benefit of his native country, to the immense advantages that might be obtained for her, and to that mighty thing, liberty, which was scarcely then known to the world. But it was not in human nature, that some breathing of personal ambition should not mingle with his nobler aspirations; and for a moment he dreamed of power, and rule, and sovereign sway, and of nobles trampled beneath his feet, and of kings bending to court his alliance.

It was but for a moment, however; and when suddenly the better spirit waked him from his dream, and showed him whither he was wandering, he hid his face in his hands, with a mixed feeling of shame for having suffered himself to be betrayed into such thoughts, and an apprehension lest, in some after-part of his career, when the golden temptation was within his grasp, he should yield to the spirit that even thus early had assailed him, and be in act what he had already been in

thought. The very idea of becoming so made him pause in his resolves, uncertain whether to take any part, lest he should ultimately take an evil one; and for a moment Albert Maurice, who feared no mortal man, hesitated in fear of himself.

Reflection, however, soon removed his doubts: he knew his intentions to be pure; and, calling before his mind the brightest examples of past ages, he determined to hold them up to himself as models to imitate, and to sacrifice every thing to virtue. Even the very doubts that he had entertained of himself made him choose his examples from the sternest school of patriotism. He felt, perhaps, that any modern efforts must fall below the standard of that antique firmness, which, nurtured by the long habit of freedom, was with the Romans of the republic a passion as much as a principle; and, fixing his eyes upon the earlier Brutus, he resolved that if ever in after-life the temptation to wrong his country should assail him, he would use that talismanic memory to charm the evil demon away for ever.

While he thus paused and thought, the night wore on; all sounds died away in the streets of Ghent: the footsteps in his uncle's house ceased; and, after the midnight watch had gone by in its round, not a sound for some time disturbed the silence of the place. At length, about one o'clock in the morning, he heard a step ascending the stairs which led to his apartment, and the moment after a tap upon the door announced that some one demanded admittance. He instantly rose, threw back the tapestry, and opened the door, when, to his surprise, he beheld the small keen features and sharp black eyes of the druggist Ganay, beside the face of one of his uncle's servants.

The sight, indeed, accorded very well with his thoughts and wishes; for though the person who thus visited him was, in character and mind, as distinct, perhaps I should say as opposite, to himself as possible, yet he was one of those men who, in moments of general excitement, are often serviceable in the highest degree, and must be used for good, lest they should employ their talents for evil.

The little druggist had, in all his motions, a silent rapidity, a quick, sharp, but stealthy sort of activity, which, to those close observers of the human race who

pretend to read in the habitual movements and peculiar customs of the body the character of the mind within, might have spoken of dark and cunning designs, prompted by strong but carefully hidden passions, with little scruple as to the means of accomplishing schemes once undertaken. Before Albert Maurice was well aware of his presence, he was in the room beside him; and in a few brief words, spoken in a low but remarkably distinct voice, had explained to the young citizen that when he went away about two hours before, he had requested the servant to wait and let him in after the rest of the family had gone to rest; and, adding that he had business of much importance to speak upon, he at once explained and apologized for his intrusion.

Albert Maurice took his excuses in good part; and, bidding the servant retire to rest, he closed the door and seated himself with his visiter, well aware that he had to encounter a mind as keen and penetrating, though far less powerful, than his own, on subjects difficult and dangerous to discuss.

"Master Albert Maurice," said Ganay, when they were alone, and the retreating step of the servant had announced to his cautious ear that his words were not likely to be overheard, "it were in vain for you or I to attempt to conceal from each other, or from ourselves, that the moment is come when great and extraordinary events must take place in our native land, or opportunities be lost which may never return again. To you, then, I come," he added, speaking with a serious earnestness, which was intended to give the appearance of sincere conviction to the flattery he was about to administer—flattery which, as he knew it to be based in truth, he calculated upon being readily received, and producing a particular purpose of his own,—"to you, then, I come, Master Albert Maurice, as to the man calculated, by nature and by circumstances, to take the most prominent part in the actions in which we are about to be engaged,—to whom the eyes of all the citizens are naturally turned, and on whom the welfare of our country must, in a great measure, depend. My object is, in no degree, to pry into your confidence, to obtrude advice upon you, or to hurry you forward faster than you may think it necessary to proceed, but simply for the purpose of offering you any assistance in my

small power to give, and of pointing out to you the necessity of thought and consultation in regard to the measures to be pursued."

The young citizen paused for a moment or two in thought ere he replied. "My good friend," he answered at length, "much consideration is, indeed, as you say, necessary. In the first place, we are by no means certain that our noble lord the duke is dead. If he be living, it will be our duty, as good subjects and good citizens, to give him all the aid in our power to repel his enemies and to recover his losses."

The druggist bit his lip, and Albert Maurice continued —"If, indeed, he unhappily have fallen in this rash attempt against the Swiss, say, what would you have us do?"

"Nay, nay, speak you," replied the druggist; "for well do we all feel that it is you must lead, and we must follow."

"I see but one thing that can be done," replied the young citizen,—"humbly to tender our allegiance and our services to the heiress of the Burgundian coronet, and to petition her to confirm to us our liberties and privileges."

He spoke slowly and calmly, in a tone of voice from which nothing could be gathered in addition to the words he uttered; and in vain did the small dark eyes of his fellow-citizen scan his countenance to discover something more. His face remained completely unmoved, if it was not by a scarcely perceptible smile at the evident anxiety and agitation with which his calmness and indifference affected his companion.

"Good God!" cried the druggist, starting up in the first impatience of disappointed expectation,—"good God! little did I expect to hear such words from your lips!—But no!" he added, after a moment's pause of deep thought, during which he rapidly combined every remembered trait in the character of Albert Maurice, with his present affected calmness, and deduced from it a true conclusion in regard to his real motives. "But no! Young man, I have marked you from your childhood. I know you as well as my own son, nay, better; —for his light follies have made him an alien to my house, though not to my heart—I have seen your character develop itself—I have seen the wild spirit and petulance of boyhood become, when brought under the

sway of maturer reason, that overwhelming enthusiasm, which, like a mighty river, is calm only because it is deep and powerful. Albert Maurice, you cannot deceive *me;* and let me tell you, that even were the course which but now you proposed to pursue that to which your feelings and your reason really led you, the people of this country would leave you to truckle to power alone; and, though—wanting one great directing mind to curb their passions, and point their endeavours to a just conclusion—they might cast one-half of Europe into anarchy, and rush upon their own destruction. Most assuredly they would do so, rather than submit again to a new despot, or place their lives and their happiness in the power of one who owns no law, no justice, but his own will."

"Think you they would do so, indeed?" demanded the young citizen, well aware of the fact, but somewhat doubtful still of the entire purity of his companion's motives.—"Think you they would do so, indeed? Then, my good friend, we must, as you say, for the safety and security of all, find some one who may lead them to better things: but to succeed we must be cautious—we must trust no man before we try him; and we must first make sure of those who lead, before we rouse up those who are to be led. Ere one step is taken, however, we must ensure the ground that we stand upon, and know what has been the real event of this great battle. Nay, nay, protest not that it is as we have heard. Rumour, the universal liar, sometimes will give us portions of the truth, beyond all doubt, but never yet, believe me, did she tell a tale that was not more than one-half falsehood. But even granting that the chief point be true, at the very threshold of our enterprise, we must learn each particular shade of thought and of opinion possessed by our great and leading citizens. Nor must Ghent stand alone; each other city throughout all Flanders must be prepared to acknowledge and support the deeds of Ghent."

"You seem to have considered the matter deeply," said the druggist, with a smile; "but I fear such long preparations, and the time necessary to excite the public mind—"

"Fear not," interrupted Albert Maurice; "fear not. You little know the commons, if you suppose that time is necessary to call them into action. A few shrewd

words, false or true, it matters not, will set the whole country in a flame as fast as news can fly. Give me but a good occasion, and an opportunity of speech, and in one half-hour all Ghent shall be in arms."

"It may be so," replied the druggist, thoughtfully; "I doubt it not—indeed I know it is so; but, methinks, my dear young friend, that while we are proceeding with such slow circumspection, our enemies may take their measures of precaution also; and as they have the present power, may use and extend it to such good effect that all our efforts will be fruitless. Already the Lord of Imbercourt has returned with a hundred and fifty lances; the number of nobles in the town, with their retainers, will furnish near five hundred more."

"Again, fear not," replied Albert Maurice: "the popular mind is as a magazine of that black hellish compound which gives roar and lightning to the cannon; one single spark, applied by a fearless hand, will make it all explode at once. The nobles stand upon a mine; and there are those in Ghent who will not fear to spring it beneath their feet should there be need, which Heaven avert. One thing, however, must be done, and that with speed. As a united body, these feudal tyrants are powerful,—too much so, indeed,—but among them there must be surely more than sufficient stores of vanity, wrath, hatred, revenge, and of all those other manifold weaknesses, which we may employ to detach some of their members from their own body, and to spread division among them.—Is there no one could be won?"

"None that I know of," replied the druggist, "except, indeed, it were my very good lord and kind patron"—he spoke with a sneer—"Thibalt of Neufchatel, who affects mighty popularity, bows his gray head to the people as low as to his saddle-bow—calls them the good commons—the worthy citizens of Ghent; and, no longer gone than yesterday, made me, Walter Ganay, the poor burgher druggist, sit down at his lordly table, and drink of his spiced wine. But I fear me, my dear young friend, though the worthy lord may affect wonderful popularity, and others of his rank might be brought to do the same, they would never stand by us in the moment of need; the interests of their class would soon resume its place in their thoughts, and they would quit the citizens whenever the citizens wanted their help."

"That matters little," replied Albert Maurice, laying his hand upon the arm of his companion. "The aid that we might derive from the swords of half a dozen nobles were but dust in the balance; but the advantages that we may derive from their seeming to be with us in the outset are great and incalculable. That which has overthrown the finest armies that were ever yet brought into the field; that which has scattered to the wind the noblest associations that ever were framed for the benefit of mankind; that which has destroyed leagues, and broken alliances, crushed republics under the feet of despots, and blasted the best-formed and brightest designs of human beings, doubt and suspicion of each other; that, that great marrer of all men's combinations, must be listed on our side against our oppressors. We must teach them to fear and to suspect each other; and the bonds that hold them together will be broken, and may remain severed till it is too late to unite them again. This Thibalt of Neufchatel," he added hastily, "I have heard of him, and seen him often. When I was a mere boy, I remember riding under his escort from the forest of Hannut, and as haughty a lord he was as e'er I met with; but now, it would seem, he has changed his tone, and is the popular, the pleasant noble, the friend of the commons; he is somewhat in his dotage too, just at that point where weakness affects great wisdom. He must be won by all means, if it be but for a day. Is there no way, think you, by which he may be brought to show himself among us at some popular meeting. A thousand to one the very fact of his having done so, and the scorn that it will call upon him from his fellow-nobles, by committing his vanity on our side, will bind him to us for ever; and he will calmly look upon the fall of his order, if it were but for the purpose of saying to each ruined baron, 'If you had done as I have, you would have been safe.'—At all events," he added, "his presence with us would sow the first seed of disunion among the proud nobility: can no means be found?"

"Oh, many, many, doubtless," replied the druggist; "but great reverence and respect must be shown to him, and all ultimate views must be concealed."

"Of course," answered Albert Maurice, "of course," and resting his brow upon his hands, he paused thoughtfully for several minutes. "Mark me, good Master

Ganay," he said, at length,—"mark me, and remember that you have sought me in this business, not I you. Think not, therefore, that in giving you directions what to do, I wish to arrogate to myself any superior power, or wisdom, or knowledge. Deeply and fervently do I wish to serve my country. As far as I see my way clearly, and as far as my countrymen choose to trust me, willingly will I take a lead in their affairs. The moment my own view or their confidence fails, I will draw back and leave the staff in better hands. Let your first step, then, be—at an early hour to-morrow—to prompt as many of the principal citizens as you can meet with, to assemble in the town-hall upon various pretences. Speak to one about changes in the price of grain, and send him thither to hear more. Tell another that the English wools have failed, and let him come for news from across the seas. Bid another to the town-hall for tidings from France; and a fourth for the news from Switzerland. I, too, will be there; and if you can so arrange it as to bring Thibalt of Neufchatel to the same place by half-past ten of the clock, I will have all prepared to fix him ours, if possible."

"I will undertake it," replied the druggist. "Albert Maurice, we understand each other, though little has been said,—and perhaps wisely; yet we understand each other, and shall do so, without further explanations; I give you good night."

"Farewell," said Albert Maurice, as the other rose to depart; "but remember, above all things, no word to any one of this night's meeting; for, if we would work well together for the benefit of all, we must not be seen together too much. Again, farewell."

Thus saying, he raised the light; and, after guiding his visiter through some of the long and tortuous passages of his uncle's dwelling, he saw him depart, and closed the door for the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

Once more within the solitude of his own chamber, Albert Maurice paused, while a degree of emotion not to be mastered passed over him as he felt that he had taken the first step in a career which must speedily bring power, and honour, and immortal glory—or the grave. As I have before said, in all the mutinous revolts of the citizens of Ghent, he had recoiled from any participation in their struggles, both with a degree of contempt for such petty broils as they usually were, and with an involuntary feeling of awe, as if he knew that whenever he did take a part in the strife, it was destined to become more deadly and more general than it had ever been before. There was nothing, indeed, of personal apprehension in his sensations. They consisted alone of a deep, overpowering feeling of the mighty, tremendous importance of the events likely to ensue, of the awful responsibility incurred, of the fearful account to be given by him who takes upon himself the dangerous task of rousing up a nation, and attempts to raise and rule the whirlwind passions of a fierce and excited people.

He had now, however, taken the first step; and he felt that that first step was irretrievable, that his bark was launched upon the stormy ocean of political intrigue, that he had left the calm shore of private station, never to behold it again; and that nothing remained for him, but to sail out the voyage he had undertaken, amid all the tempests and the hurricanes that might attend his course. It could scarcely be called a weakness to yield one short unseen moment to emotion under such a feeling; to look back with lingering regret upon the calm days behind; and to strive with anxious thought to snatch some part of the mighty secrets of the future from beyond the dark mysterious veil which God, in his great mercy, has cast over the gloomy sanctuary of fate. It was but for a moment that he thus yielded; and then, with a power which some men of vast minds possess, he cast from him the load of thought,

prepared, when the moment of action came, to act decisively; and feeling that his corporeal frame required repose, he stretched himself upon his bed, and slept without a dream à sleep as deep, as still, as calm, as we may suppose to have visited the tent of Cæsar when, conscious of coming empire, he had passed the Rubicon.

It lasted not long, however, and the first rays of the morning sun, as they found their way through the narrow lattice of his chamber, waked him with energies refreshed, and with a mind prepared for whatever fortunes the day might bring.

A few hours passed in writing, and a short explanation with his uncle in regard to the exigences of the approaching moment, consumed the time between the young burgher's rising and the hour appointed for the meeting in the town-hall; and, accompanied by worthy Martin Fruse, whom he well knew that he could rule as he liked, Albert Maurice proceeded into the streets of Ghent.

In deference to his uncle's dislike to the elevation of a horse's back, the young citizen took his way on foot, followed, as well as preceded by two serving-men, to which the station of Martin Fruse, as syndic of the cloth-workers, gave him a right, without the imputation of ostentation. It was not, indeed, the custom of either of the two citizens to show themselves in the streets of their own town thus accompanied, except upon occasions of municipal state; but, in the present instance, both were aware that, if the news of the preceding day were true, sudden aid from persons on whom they could rely, either as combatants or messengers, might be required.

It was a market-day in the city of Ghent; and as they walked on, many a peasant laden with rural merchandise was passed by them in the streets, and many a group of gossiping men and women, blocking up the passage of the narrow ways, was disturbed by the important zeal of the serving-men making way for the two high citizens whom they preceded. The streets, indeed, were all flutter and gayety; but the market-place itself offered a still more lively scene, being filled to overflowing with the population of the town and the neighbouring districts, in all the gay and glittering colours of their holyday costume.

Although the market had already begun, the principal traffic which seemed to be carrying on was that in news; and the buzz of many voices, all speaking together, announced how many were eager to tell as well as to hear. No sooner had the two citizens entered that flat, open square which every one knows as the chief market-place of old Ghent, than the tall, graceful figure of the younger burgher caught the eyes of the people around; and in answer to a question from some one near, an artisan, who had come thither either to buy or sell, replied, "It is Master Albert Maurice, the great merchant, just returned, they say, from Namur."

The words were immediately taken up by another near; and the announcement of the popular citizen's presence ran like lightning through the crowd. A whispering hum, and a movement of all the people, as he advanced, some to make way, and some to catch a sight of him, was all that took place at first. But soon his name was given out louder and more loud as it passed from mouth to mouth; and at length some one in the middle of the market-place threw up his cap into the air, and in a moment the whole place echoed with "Long live Albert Maurice, the good friend of the people of Ghent!"

Doffing his bonnet, the young citizen advanced upon his way towards the town-hall, bowing on every side to the populace with that bland yet somewhat stately smile upon his fine arching lip which wins so much love, without losing a tittle of respect; and still the people as he went cheered him with many voices, while every now and then some individuals would salute him in various modes, according to their rank and situation.

"Give thee good day, Master Albert Maurice!" cried one who claimed some acquaintance with him.—"God bless thee for a noble citizen!" exclaimed another.—"Long life to Albert Maurice!" shouted a third.—"What news from Namur?" demanded a fourth.—"Speak to us, noble sir!" again exclaimed another: "speak to us! speak to us! as you one day did on the bridge!"

Such cries were multiplying; and popular excitement, which is very easily changed into popular tumult, was proceeding to a higher point than Albert Maurice wished, especially as among the crowd he observed several soldiers. These, though a word would have rendered them

the objects of the people's fury, were much more likely to become the reporters of the public feeling to the government, before the preparations which he contemplated were mature; and he was accordingly hurrying his pace to avoid disturbance, when suddenly the sound of trumpets from the opposite side of the square diverted the attention of all parties.

The young citizen turned his eyes thitherward with the rest, and made his way forward in that direction, as soon as he perceived a dense but small body of armed horsemen debouching from the street that led from the palace, with trumpets sounding before them, and raised lances, as if their errand were as peaceful as their garb was warlike.

Apprehensive that something might occur which would require that rapid decision and presence of mind which rule in many cases even the great ruler—circumstance, he hurried on, while the people made way for him to pass; probably from a tacit conviction that he alone of all the assemblage was qualified to deal with great events. As he approached, the body of horsemen reached the little fountain in the middle of the market-place, and he caught the flutter of female habiliments in the midst of the guard.

At that moment the squadron opened, and, clearing a small space around, displayed a brilliant group in the centre, on which all eyes were instantly turned. A number of the personages of which it was composed were well known, at least by sight, to the young burgher; and from their presence he easily divined the names and characters of the rest. Mounted on a splendid black charger, there appeared, among others, the Lord of Ravestein, first cousin of the Duke of Burgundy, together with the Duke of Clèves and the Lord of Imbercourt. The faces of these noblemen, as well as that of Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy, Albert Maurice knew full well; but in the midst of all was a countenance he had never beheld before. It was that of a fair, beautiful girl, of about twenty years of age, whose sweet hazel eyes, filled with mild and pensive light, and curtained by long dark lashes, expressed—if ever eyes were the mind's heralds—a heart, a soul subdued by its own powers; full of deep feelings, calmed, but not lessened, by its own command over itself. All the other features were in harmony with those eyes,

beautiful in themselves, but still more beautiful by the expression which they combined to produce; and the form, also, to which they belonged, instinct with grace and beauty, seemed framed by nature in her happiest mood, to correspond with that fair face.

Albert Maurice needed not to be told that there was Mary of Burgundy. He gazed on her without surprise; for he had ever heard that she was most beautiful; but, as he gazed, by an instinctive reverence for the loveliness he saw, he took his bonnet from his head, and, all the crowd following his example, stood bareheaded before her, while a short proclamation was read twice by a herald.

"Mary of Burgundy," it ran, "Governess of Flanders on behalf of her father, Charles Duke of Burgundy, to her dearly beloved citizens of Ghent. It having been industriously circulated by some persons, enemies to the state, that the high and mighty prince our father Charles as aforesaid, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, Artois, and Hainault, had been slain in Switzerland, which God forefend! and knowing both the zeal and love of the good citizens of Ghent towards our father, and how much pain such evil tidings would occasion them, we hasten to assure them that such rumour is entirely false and malicious; and that the duke our father is well in health and stout in the field, as is vouched by letters received last night by special couriers from his camp; and God and St. Andrew hold him well for ever! "MARY."

A loud cheer rose from all the people, while, bending her graceful head, and smiling sweetly on the crowd, the heiress of Burgundy acknowledged the shout, as if it had been given in sincere congratulation on her father's safety. The princess and her attendants then rode on, to witness the same proclamation in another place; but Albert Maurice stood gazing upon the fair sight as it passed away from his eyes, feeling that beauty and sweetness, such as he there beheld, had claims to rule far different from those of mere iron-handed power He was wakened from his revery, however, by some one pulling him by the cloak; and, turning round, he beheld the little druggist Ganay, who, with an air of as much bitter disappointment, anger, and surprise as habitual command over his features would allow them

to assume, looked up in the face of Albert Maurice, demanding, "What is to be done now?"

"Where is the Lord of Neufchatel?" rejoined the young citizen, without directly answering.

"Thank God, not yet arrived!" replied the druggist. "Shall I go and stay him from coming?"

"No!" answered Albert Maurice, thoughtfully. "No, let him come; it were better that he should,—now, fair uncle," he continued, speaking to Martin Fruse, who had followed him through the crowd, and still stood beside him where the multitude had left them almost alone,—"now, fair uncle, let us to the town-hall, whither Master Ganay will accompany us. You, who are good speakers, had better propose an address of the city in answer to the proclamation just made; and the good Lord of Neufchatel, who will be present, will doubtless look on, and answer for your loyal dispositions. For my part, I shall keep silence."

He spoke these words aloud, but with a peculiar emphasis, which easily conveyed to the mind of the druggist his conviction that the further prosecution of their purposes must be delayed for the time; and as they proceeded towards the town-hall, Albert Maurice, by a few brief words, which good Martin Fruse neither clearly understood nor sought to understand, explained to the other the necessity of keeping the Lord of Neufchatel attached to their party.

Albert Maurice then fell into silence, which was deep and somewhat painful; and yet, strange to say, the news that he had heard of the Duke of Burgundy's safety, and the turn that the affairs had taken, was far from a disappointment to him—it was a relief. The very sight of the princess had made him thoughtful. To behold so fair, and seemingly so gentle a creature, and to know that, as he stood there before her, he bore within his own bosom the design, the resolve—however noble might be his motives, however great the object he proposed—of breaking the sceptre which was to descend to her, and of tearing from her hand the power she held from her mighty ancestors, produced feelings any thing but sweet. Thence, too, thought ran on; and he asked himself, why was her reign the one to be marked out for overthrowing the ancient rule of her fathers? and he was forced to acknowledge that it was because she was weak and young, a woman, and an orphan—

and that was no very elevating reflection. Still farther, as he passed across the whole extent of the market-place once more, when the princess had just left it, he found all the busy tongues that had been lately vociferating his name now so occupied with the fresh topic, that he walked on almost without notice; and contempt for that evanescent thing popular favour did not tend to raise his spirits to a higher pitch.

He entered the town-hall then, gloomy; and though all the great traders present united to congratulate him on his safe return to Ghent, he remained thoughtful and sad, and could only throw off the reserve which had fallen upon him, when the arrival of the Lord of Neufchatel gave him a strong motive for exertion.

The other persons present received the noble baron who condescended to visit their town-hall with a degree of embarrassment which, though not perhaps unpleasing to him, from the latent reverence that it seemed to evince, was, at least, inconvenient. But Albert Maurice, on the contrary, with calm confidence in his own powers, and the innate dignity which that confidence bestows, met the nobleman with ease equal to his own; though without the slightest abatement of that formal respect, and all those terms of courteous ceremony, to which his station gave him a title, and which the young citizen was anxious to yield. This mixture of graceful ease with profound reverence of demeanour delighted not a little the old seneschal of Burgundy; and when, after a time, an address was proposed and discussed in his presence, and his opinions were listened to and received with universal approbation, the sense of conscious superiority, satisfied pride, and gratified vanity taught the worthy old lord to regard the good citizens of Ghent with feelings of pleasure and affection, very different from those he had once entertained.

It so luckily happened also, that on this the first occasion of his mingling among the citizens, their proceedings were of such a character as could not, in the least, compromise him with his fellow-nobles. The matter discussed was merely a congratulatory address to the princess, in answer to her proclamation, setting forth nothing but loyalty and obedience, and carefully avoiding the slightest allusion to all topics of complaint and discontent. The little druggist Ganay spoke at length upon the subject; and, piquing himself rather

than otherwise upon a degree of hypocritical art, he launched forth into high and extraordinary expressions of joy on the good tidings that the princess had been pleased to communicate, assured her of the loyalty and devotion of the good people of Ghent, and even ventured upon a high and laudatory picture of her father's character.

Albert Maurice stood by in silence; and though the druggist so far mistook his character as to imagine that the young citizen might admire the skill and dexterity with which he changed the purpose of their meeting, such was far from the case. While he listened, and suffered the other to proceed in a task with which he did not choose to meddle himself, the feelings of Albert Maurice were those of deep contempt; and he silently marked all the words and actions of the other, in order to read every trait of his character, and to acquire a complete insight into the workings of his dark and designing mind, which might be useful to him in the events which were still to come. Nor was the druggist alone the subject of his observation. Always a keen inquisitor of the human heart, Albert Maurice now watched more particularly than ever the conduct of the different influential citizens, as persons with whom he might hereafter have to act in circumstances of difficulty; but it was upon Ganay that his attention was principally fixed, both from a feeling that he would have to use him as a tool, or oppose him as an enemy, if ever those events occurred which he anticipated; and also from a belief that the other, in striving to hurry him forward, had some deep personal motive at the bottom of his heart.

During the whole course of the discussion the young citizen spoke but a few words, the tendency of which was, to add to the congratulation of the citizens, addressed to the Princess Mary, the petition that she would be the guardian and protectress of the liberties and privileges of the citizens of Ghent. While he was in the very act of speaking, there came a clanging sound of a number of steps on the grand staircase, and, the moment after, an armed head appeared above the rest; a second followed, and then a number more; and it became very evident that a considerable band of soldiers were intruding themselves into a place sacred by immemorial usage from their presence. The citizens drew back as the

troopers forced their way forward, and gradually, with many expressions of surprise and indignation, gathered round the spot where Albert Maurice had been speaking. With the young burgher himself, indignation at the violation of the privileges of the city overcame every other feeling; and, starting forward before the rest of the burghers, he faced at once, with his hand upon his sword, the inferior officer who was leading forward the men-at-arms, exclaiming, "Back, back, upon your life," in a voice that made the vaulted roof of the building echo with its stern, determined tones.

The officer did, indeed, take a step back at his command; for there was a lightning in his eye at that moment that was not to be encountered rashly. "Sir," said the lieutenant of the prévôt, for such he was, "I come here but to do my duty, and I must do it."

"And pray, sir, what duty," demanded Albert Maurice, "can afford you an excuse for violating the laws of your country and the privileges of the city of Ghent? Have you never heard by chance that this is our free town-hall, in which no soldier but a member of the burgher-guard has a right to set his foot?"

"I come, sir," replied the man, "not so much as a soldier as an officer of justice, in order to arrest you yourself, Albert Maurice, charged with high-treason, and to lodge you as a prisoner in the castle till such time as you can be brought to trial for your offences."

Albert Maurice deliberately unsheathed his sword,—a weapon which at that time the citizens of many of the great towns of Flanders and Brabant held it their peculiar right to wear. Others were instantly displayed around him; and at the same moment the little druggist sprang up to the window, and, putting out his head, shouted forth, "To arms, citizens of Ghent; to arms!" which words the ears of those within might hear taken up instantly by those without; and the cry, well known in all the tumults of the city, of "Sta! sta! sta!—to arms! to arms!" was heard echoing through the square below; while Albert Maurice replied slowly and deliberately to the lieutenant of the prévôt.

"Sir," he said, "whatever may be your motive for coming here, and be the charge against me just or not, you have violated one of the privileges of the city, which never shall be violated with impunity in my person. I command you instantly to withdraw your men; and,

perhaps, on such condition, you may receive pardon for your offence. As far as concerns myself, I appeal from your jurisdiction, and lay my cause before the princess, to whom I am willing immediately to follow."

"That, sir, is utterly impossible," replied the lieutenant; "nor will I consent to withdraw my men till I have executed the commission with which I am charged."

"Then witness every one," exclaimed Albert Maurice, "that the consequences of his own deed be upon the head of this rash man."

The parties within the hall—of citizens on the one hand, and soldiers on the other—were very equally matched in point of numbers, though the superior discipline and arms of the prévôt's guard would, in all probability, have given them the advantage in the strife that seemed about to commence; but while each body paused, with that natural reluctance which men always have to strike the first blow, the multiplying shouts and cries in the square before the town-house gave sufficient notice that an immense superiority of numbers would soon be cast upon the side of the citizens. Both Albert Maurice and the prévôt's lieutenant caught the sounds; and the former, pointing towards the open windows, exclaimed, "Listen, and be warned!"

"Do you, sir, really intend to resist the lawful authority of the duke?" demanded the other, with evident symptoms of shaken resolution and wavering courage.

"Not in the least, sir," replied Albert Maurice, calmly but firmly; "nor do I desire to see blood flow, or tumult take place, though the cause be your own rash breach of the privileges of the city. I appeal my cause to the princess herself; and you well know that from the very name you have given the charge against me—that of treason—the eschevins of the city are incompetent to deal with the case."

"Nay, but the princess cannot hear your cause today," replied the lieutenant of the prévôt; "for she has gone forth but just now towards Alost, to publish the safety of my lord the duke. You must, therefore, surrender yourself a prisoner till she returns."

"Nay, nay," replied Albert Maurice, "not so: here all the chief citizens of Ghent will be surety for my

appearance. Into their hands I yield myself, but not into yours."

"I must have better bail than that," answered the lieutenant, with perturbation of mind, evidently increasing every moment as the shouts became louder without, and the noise of frequent feet in the stone vestibule below gave notice that his position was growing every instant more and more dangerous. At that moment, however, the old Lord of Neufchatel advanced to the side of the young citizen. "Hark ye, Master Lieutenant," he said; "to end all this affray, I, Thibalt of Neufchatel, knight and noble, do pledge myself for the appearance of this young citizen, Master Albert Maurice, to answer before the princess the crime with which he is charged; and I become his bail in life and limb, lands and lordship, in all that I can become bound or forfeit, to my lord the duke: and now, sir, get you gone; for this day have you committed a gross and shameful outrage against the privileges of these good people of Ghent; and I, old Thibalt of Neufchatel, tell you so to your beard."

"Long live the Lord of Neufchatel! Long live the defender of the people of Ghent! Long live the gallant friend of the commons!" shouted a hundred voices at once, as the old noble thus far committed himself in their cause, and waved his hand for the lieutenant of the prévôt to retire.

Much would that officer have now given to have been able to do so without any prospect of annoyance; but by this time the two large entrances at the end of the hall were completely blocked up by a dense crowd of traders and artisans, armed hastily with whatever weapons they had been able to find, from partisans to weavers' beams. Beyond the doorways, again, the antechamber was completely filled by men of the same description; and from the number of voices shouting up and down the great staircase, it was clear that the whole town-house was thronged with the stirred-up multitude. Those who had first reached the door had, with more moderation than might have been expected, paused in their advance as soon as they saw the parley that was going on between the citizens and the soldiers. But when the lieutenant of the prévôt turned round to effect his retreat, they made no movement to give him way,

and stood firm, with a sort of dogged determination which the slightest word from any one present would have changed in a moment into actual violence. The officer paused as soon as he saw the attitude they had assumed, and eyed them with doubt not a little mingled with fear; the citizens round Albert Maurice stood silent, as if undetermined how to act; and the grim faces of the crowd, worked by many an angry passion, filled up the other side of the hall.

The resolution of Albert Maurice himself, however, was taken in a moment; and, advancing from among his friends, he passed round before the prévôt's band, and approached the crowd that obstructed their passage out. "My good friends," he said, "let me entreat of you to keep peace, and let these men depart quietly. Let us not risk our rights and privileges, and stain a just and noble cause, by any act of violence; let them go forth in safety; and we here, your fellow-citizens, will see that no breach of our rights take place."

No one moved a step; and for a moment or two the leaders of the crowd remained in silence, looking alternately at each other and at the young speaker, with an expression of countenance which boded but little good to the luckless band of the prévôt. At length one gruff voice demanded, "What do they here?"

"They came with orders from their superior officer," replied Albert Maurice, "for the purpose of arresting me."

"Then they should die for their pains," replied the same rough voice, which was supported by loud cries from behind of "Down with them! down with them!"

"Nay, nay," exclaimed Albert Maurice, raising his tone; "it must not, it shall not be so. Men of Ghent! for my honour, for your own; for the safety and privileges of the town; let them pass free. If ye love me," he added in a gentler voice.

This appeal to their feeling towards himself was not without its effect; and, after considerable persuasions and delays, he prevailed upon them to withdraw from the antechamber and the staircase, and then, leading down the lieutenant himself, he conducted him and his men-at-arms through a lane of very ominous-looking faces in the vestibule out into the great square, which was now thronged in almost every part by bodies of the armed populace. Through the midst of these, also,

though not without considerable danger, Albert Maurice obtained a free passage for the prévôt's band; nor did he leave them till he had seen them clear of all obstruction. The lieutenant had remained completely silent during their passage through the crowd, except when called upon to give some command to his men concerning their array. When, however, they were free from the people, he took the hand of the young citizen in his, and wrung it hard: "Master Albert Maurice," he said, "you have acted a noble part, and it shall be remembered when it may do you good."

"Let it be remembered, sir," replied the young citizen, "to show that the people and burghers of Ghent, while they are determined to maintain their rights with vigour, are equally determined not to maintain them with violence. Do but justice, sir, to our motives and our conduct, and we demand no more."

As soon as he had seen the little band of soldiers placed beyond the risk of all further opposition, he returned to the town-hall, amid the shouts of the people, who were now lingering to talk over the events that had already occurred, and to see whether any thing fresh might not arise to give them an opportunity of exercising the arms they held in their hands, and of satisfying the spirit that had been excited among them. On his arrival in the hall, he instantly approached the Lord of Neufchatel, saying, "Of course, I consider myself as a prisoner in your hands, my lord, till such time as I can be heard in my own defence by the princess and her council, which, I beseech you, may be as soon as you can bring it about."

"You seem to understand all these things, young gentleman," replied the old noble, "as well as if you had been born to courts. Let us now go forth, then, to my lodging, where I will entertain you as well as my poor means will admit; and will immediately send to ascertain when the princess will condescend to hear your cause."

This mode of proceeding was, of course, immediately adopted; and Albert Maurice accompanied the Lord of Neufchatel to his dwelling; where, partly as a prisoner, partly as a guest, he remained during the rest of the day, and the night that followed. The conduct of his entertainer towards him was a combination of stately hospitality and patronising superiority; and Albert Mau-

rice, without abating one jot of that innate dignity and proud sense of mental greatness which more or less affected his usual demeanour, succeeded, by showing all due reverence for the rank of his host, and expressing no small gratitude for the liberal feeling he had displayed towards him, in winning each hour upon the old officer's esteem. The whole history of his case, also, as it had occurred, and the written testimony which he produced to show the origin of his arrest by Maillotin du Bac, afforded a sufficient presumption of his innocence to satisfy the old Lord of Neufchatel, who assured the young citizen of his personal protection and support before the council. Late in the evening a messenger from the palace announced, that at noon the next day the Princess Mary would hear Albert Maurice and his accusers; and shortly after the old lord left him for the night, bidding him amuse himself with a few books and papers which he pointed out in the chamber assigned to him, and recommending him not to think further of to-morrow, as his acquittal was certain. Albert Maurice, willingly following his advice, sat down to read; and the sun soon after set to the young citizen, leaving him in a position as different as it is possible to conceive from that which he had contemplated the night before as his probable situation at the end of four-and-twenty hours.

And so it is through life! Where is the cunning astrologer, or sage, or politician, that can lay out, beforehand, the scheme of a single day?

CHAPTER XIV.

During the course of the following morning Albert Maurice was visited, in the sort of honourable imprisonment to which he was subjected, by all the chief citizens of Ghent; and a number of them begged permission of the ex-seneschal of Burgundy to accompany their young townsman to the council-table of the palace. This was immediately granted to Martin Fruse and several others, who, by relationship or connexion, could claim a near interest in the fate of Albert Maurice. At the same

time the rumour of what was about to occur spread all over Ghent, and before the arrival of the appointed hour, a large crowd, composed of different classes, surrounded the great gate of the dwelling of the Lord of Neufchatel. At about half-past eleven, one of the young citizen's own horses was brought from his house to the place of his temporary abode; and, shortly after, the old nobleman rode forth, accompanied by his *protégé*, and followed by half a dozen of the principal burghers; while a party of about twenty of his own armed attendants brought up the rear of the cavalcade. In this order, and among deafening shouts from the people, who ran on by the sides of their horses, they proceeded to the palace, where a considerable crowd was also assembled.

In the court-yard, drawn up so as to face the great gate, was a small body of men-at-arms clad in complete steel, with horses furnished with that sort of defensive armour called bard or bardo; while, in a double line from the entrance of the outer enclosure to the steps before the palace appeared a strong body of arquebusiers with their slow matches lighted, as if prepared for an anticipated struggle; behind these, again, appeared the soldiers of the prévôt's guard, who were chosen in general from those lighter and more active troops which at a former period were called in the English armies hobblers, but which had now generally obtained the name of *jennetaires*, from the jennets, or light Spanish horses, on which they were usually mounted.

The Lord of Neufchatel and his companions alighted at the outer gate, and passed on foot through the formidable military array above described. The old nobleman led the way, followed by Albert Maurice, who, with a firm step and an upright carriage, but without the slightest touch of bravado in his demeanour, passed along the whole line, which, he plainly saw, was drawn up to overawe any attempt to rescue him, that the populace might be inclined to make in case of his condemnation. The same demonstrations of military force appeared in the outer hall, and in an anteroom beyond, in which the young citizen and his companions were detained for a few minutes, while his arrival was announced in the chamber of audience, with which it communicated.

It were in vain to say that no shade of emotion passed

through the bosom of Albert Maurice as he stood there waiting for an audience which was to determine his fate for life or death; but still his feelings were very different from those which men of less firm nerve might be supposed to experience on such an occasion. Poor Martin Fruse, who stood behind him, quivered in every limb with anxiety and apprehension; fidgeted here and there, and many a time and oft plucked his nephew by the sleeve, to receive rather than to yield consolation and encouragement. The countenance of the young burgher, however, was in no way troubled: there was in it that expression of deep, grave thought which befitted the time and circumstances; but his brow was unclouded, his cheek had lost not a tint of its natural hue, and his lip quivered not with any thing like agitation.

After a brief pause, two soldiers, who stood with their partisans crossed before the entrance of the audience-hall, raised their weapons at a signal from within. The doors were thrown open, and in the midst of much hurrying and confusion—for a number of persons had by some means gained admission to the ante-chamber to witness the proceedings—Albert Maurice, and those who accompanied him, were led forward to the end of a long table, at which were seated a body of the noblest men of the land. A wooden bar had been drawn from each side of the council-board to the wall on either hand; and two soldiers with drawn swords were placed within these barriers, to prevent the spectators from advancing beyond them. The space thus left at the end of the hall, being but small, was soon filled up, and the doors were immediately closed by the orders of the Lord of Imbercourt, who was sitting near the head of the table.

In the chair of state, which occupied the principal place in the hall, sat the same gentle, beautiful being whom Albert Maurice had seen the day before in the great square. She was dressed as befitted her state and station; and, in a semicircle behind her, stood a bevy of fair girls, whose beauty, however, faded completely before her own. She was somewhat paler than the day before, and perhaps a slight degree of agitation and anxiety might be visible in her looks: but still the predominant expression of her countenance was gentle calmness; and, as she raised the dark fringes of her soft hazel eyes towards the accused, when he took his

place at the end of the table, they seemed to say, "I shall be a lenient judge."

His eyes met hers for a moment, and the colour rose slightly in her cheek as they did so; while, at the same time, a thrill of feelings, new and strange, passed through the heart of Albert Maurice. The principal places of the council-table were filled by the Lords of Ravestein, Imbercourt, Hugonet, and Vere; but the Duchess of Burgundy herself, the wife of Charles the Bold, was not present.

A momentary silence succeeded the bustle of their entrance, and the Lord of Neufchatel surrendered in due form the prisoner for whom he had become responsible, and claimed to be delivered from the charge. The business of the council then seemed suspended for a time, from some motive which Albert Maurice did not understand. This was explained, however, the minute after, when a door, which entered within the bar, was thrown open, and Maillotin du Bac, his countenance as pale as ashes, his arm in a sling, and his head wrapped in innumerable bandages, was supported into the hall by two attendants. The eye of the princess fixed upon him with an expression of grief and compassion, and making an eager gesture with her hand, she exclaimed, "Place him a chair, place him a chair!"

This command was immediately obeyed; and after the prévôt had paused for a few minutes to regain strength, he was directed to proceed with his charge against Albert Maurice, qualified simply as a citizen of Ghent. This he instantly did with a loudness of tone and a degree of vindictive vehemence which no one could have supposed him capable of exerting, from the weak state in which he appeared to be. His present charge was somewhat differently couched from that which he had made against the young citizen at the castle of Hannut: he passed over in complete silence all the circumstances of the prisoner's arrest, merely stating that he had received information of a treasonable communication carried on by this young citizen, between Ghent, Namur, and France; and that he had arrested him accordingly. On his person he said he had found letters, the tendency of which placed the facts beyond doubt; and also showed that the prisoner was criminally connected with those lawless bands of *routiers* and plunderers called the green riders. He

then went on to detail his having placed him recently in one of the strongest dungeons of the castle of Hannut, and of his having discovered the next morning that the dungeon was vacant. How it became so he said he could not tell; but certain it was that he had not been received by the Lord of Hannut with that courtesy and willing co-operation which, as an officer of the Duke of Burgundy, he had a right to expect. He next detailed to the council his pursuit of the green riders; and related the manner in which he had been attacked and defeated, although he rated the number of the brigands as not less than triple that of his own band. It was evidently their design, he said, and probably their whole design, to deprive him of the papers which proved the guilt of their comrade and ally, who stood there at the end of the table. In this view they had unfortunately been too successful; but he was ready to swear upon his knightly oath, and two or three of his band, to whom he had shown those papers, were prepared to bear witness, that they were of a most treasonable character.

To confirm this statement two of the troopers were accordingly called in, and swore to the prévôt having shown them the papers found upon the prisoner's person, which were full of treason in every line.

During the evidence of one of these persons, the eye of Maillotin du Bac detected the old Lord of Neufchatel in whispering something to the prisoner; and he exclaimed loudly and indecently against that nobleman for cogging, as he called it, with a base mechanical citizen and a traitor.

"Hark ye, Sir Maillotin du Bac," replied the old lord, bursting forth with no small indignation, "you yourself are a grovelling hound; and by the Lord that lives, the first time I meet thee I will drub out of thee the little life that the good green riders have left thee, and more—"

"Peace, peace, sirs," interrupted the Lord of Imbercourt; "you forget the presence in which you stand, your own dignity, and the solemnity of the occasion. My Lord of Neufchatel, do you object to tell the counsel what you whispered but now in the ear of that young man?"

"Not I, in faith," replied the other; "that was just what I was about to tell you when you interrupted me. I was then saying that the fellow there, who has just

sworn to having read so much treason, must have learned to read very fast, and somewhat late in the day; for not a year ago he was trumpeter in my train, and could not tell an A from a Z."

"Ha!" cried the Lord of Imbercourt, "this must be looked to. Some one hand him a book—methinks thou turnest mighty pale," he added, speaking to the trooper as his command was obeyed; and a volume of the archives of Burgundy was placed in the man's hand. "There, read me that sentence!"

With trembling hands the man held the book, gazing with a white face and lack-lustre eyes upon the characters which it contained, and which were evidently to him meaningless enough. After a moment's vain effort to perform the impossible task, he lifted his eyes, and rolled them, full of dismay and detected guilt, round the faces of all present; while Maillotin du Bac, in rage and disappointment, set his teeth firm in his pale lip, and stamped his foot heavily upon the ground. The brow of the Chancellor Hugonet darkened; and, pointing to the man who had so evidently committed a gross and wilful perjury, he exclaimed, "Take him away, and let him be well guarded." The command was immediately obeyed, and the trooper was hurried out of the chamber by two of the attendants.

"Do you not think, my lords," said the low, sweet voice of Mary of Burgundy, "that we may dismiss this cause? If it be supported by such witnesses as these, it will bring more disgrace upon our nation than can be well wiped off."

"We must not forget, madam," replied Imbercourt, "that here is justice to be done to the characters of two persons, the accused and his accuser; and though the nature of the testimony offered as yet may well induce us to view this charge with suspicion, yet we should be doing less than justice to this young citizen of your good town of Ghent, did we not give him the opportunity of clearing his character fully from even a shade of doubt. Sir Maillotin du Bac," he added somewhat sternly, "have you any other testimony to produce in support of your accusation?"

"Methinks," replied the prévôt boldly, "that my own word and testimony should be enough."

"Not here, sir," replied Imbercourt. "You, young gentleman," he added, addressing the young burgher,

"you have heard the charge against you; do you desire to speak in your defence?"

"I pray thee, do so, young sir," said the princess, bending slightly forward; "we would fain believe you wholly innocent, for we cannot believe that our noble father, the Duke Charles, can have done any thing to turn one true heart against him; and we would fain hear that such a word as treason is unknown in the good land of Flanders, except in the mouths of base calumniators, such as the man who, but now, has been taken hence."

Albert Maurice bent low his head, and then raising his eyes, he replied, "Madam, for your good opinion I would plead long; and that I felt conscious of my innocence, and able to establish it before you, you may in some degree see by the bold appeal I have made to your justice, rather than trust myself in the hands of one whose character is not famous for equal dealing. It seldom happens, lady, that even in this evil world one man persecutes another without some motive, springing from either avarice, ambition, or revenge; and yon prévôt's bare word, perhaps, might weigh even against the fair character I trust I have hitherto borne, could I not prove that, besides the general hate which he bears towards the citizens of Ghent, he has a cause of personal animosity against myself. The tale is soon told, and the proofs of its veracity are in my hand," he added, laying his finger upon the papers which he had collected to prove his innocence. "In the small town of Gembloux, whither I had gone, on business relating to the traffic of my house, I heard a woman's scream, and saw the wife of an honest burgher insulted and ill-treated at her own door by one of the brutal soldiers of that prévôt's band; a band, lady, which, by their insolent contempt of all the ordinary charities and feelings of civil life, have brought more hatred upon the rulers of Flanders than ever your noble father dreamed of, and than ever their services against the brigands can repay. But no more on that score," he continued, as the Lord of Imbercourt held up his hand with a warning gesture. "Suffice it, I saw a woman ill-treated by one of the soldiers of his band, and I struck the miscreant to the earth in the very deed; and where is there a Christian man, be he knight or noble, citizen or peasant, who shall say that I did wrong? Before I was aware, however, I was seized and overpowered by numbers, my arms tied

with cords, my horseboy beaten and driven out of the town, my baggage plundered, and several sealed letters which I was bearing from Namur to Ghent broken open, and read, for the purpose of forging accusations against me."

"You hear, lords, you hear!" exclaimed Maillotin du Bac; "he acknowledges the fact of the letters, mark that."

"Ay, do mark it, noble lords! mark it well," continued Albert Maurice, boldly: "I do acknowledge it. Nay, more, I acknowledge that in those letters was the expression of some grief and indignation felt by the people of Namur, on account of infringed rights and violated privileges. But at the same time, I do most strictly deny that I knew one word of the contents of those letters, till they were read by yon bad man in my presence; and still more, I affirm, that even had I known every thing that they contained, or had I written them myself, there was no sentence in them which tyranny itself could wrest into such a crime as treason. Lady, and you, lords of the council, yon prévôt has called witnesses to tell you what were the contents of those letters, and of the honour and good faith of those witnesses you have had an opportunity of judging. I will now call upon a witness also, with whose character you have equal means of being acquainted. My Lord of Imbercourt, to you I appeal. Those letters were shown to you in my presence; and if you can, upon your knightly honour, declare that they contain treason, do so before the world."

"Your appeal to me, young gentleman," replied the Lord of Imbercourt, "must not be made in vain. I do most solemnly declare, on my honour and oath as a belted knight, that in the letters shown me by the prévôt, as found upon that young citizen's person, though there were some expressions bordering upon turbulent discontent, yet there was nothing, in my poor judgment, which any sane man could construe into treason."

The eyes of Mary of Burgundy had fixed eagerly upon the counsellor as he spoke; and when he uttered the last words, a bright smile of gentle satisfaction lighted up all her features, while a slight glow, spreading over her face, seemed to tell with what anxiety she had listened to the testimony of the Lord of Imbercourt. That smile and that glow were not unmarked by Albert Maurice; and his own cheek flushed, and his own rich

voice rather trembled, as he proceeded with the next sentences of his defence.

"On such grounds of accusation, lady," he continued, "was I dragged along, tied hand and foot as a criminal of the worst description—hurried forward in this situation with the rest of the troop, while they attacked a party of *routiers* in the forest of Hannut—carried on to the castle in that forest, and thrown into a dark dungeon, with a pile of straw for my bed. I thence made my escape—"

"How!" shouted the voice of Maillotin du Bac—"how!"

"How matters not," replied Albert Maurice.

"Ay, by my faith, but it does," rejoined the prévôt; "for I accuse you, sir citizen, of leaguing with these forest swine that have so long plundered and desolated the land. Every one of my men can bear witness, that for the papers concerning you alone was I attacked near Braine-la-Leud; that they were the first things sought for when we were overpowered by numbers, and that the continual cry of their leaders was,—'Secure the papers.'"

Albert Maurice paused, and the Chancellor Hugonet exclaimed, "You had better explain your escape, young gentleman; this gives a new aspect to the case."

"On the facts that followed I can say something also," observed the Lord of Imbercourt, "having been in the castle of my good brother of Hannut when the absence of the prisoner was first discovered."

"Speak, then, my lord, speak," said Mary of Burgundy eagerly; "such testimony as yours is beyond all question; and, unaccustomed to such scenes as this, I would fain see this case terminated speedily and well. Speak, then, my lord, and tell us all you know."

"It were better," replied Imbercourt, "and more in the forms of justice, to suffer the accused to tell his own tale in regard to his escape; before I give any evidence that I can upon the subject. If you require it, sir," he added, addressing the young citizen, "I will absent myself from the council-table while you deliver your statement, that my testimony may be considered the more impartial."

"Not in the least, my lord," replied Albert Maurice, "do I desire your absence at all; nor is it my purpose to make any statement in regard to my escape.—Escape

I did—Of course I could not have done so effectually without some aid, from without or from within; and I do not choose to injure any one, however lowly or however high, by implicating them in an affair like this. Whatever you know upon the subject must be from some other source, and knowing my own innocence in every respect, I hear you without apprehension."

"I have then but little beyond conjecture to advance," said Imbercourt. "On the morning after our arrival at the castle of Hannut, this prévôt presented himself in great wrath before my noble brother-in-law and myself, informing us of the escape of the prisoner, and insinuated, in somewhat insolent terms, that the Lord of Hannut—as loyal a nobleman as ever lived—had abetted the evasion. An instant investigation was instituted, and we learned that the dungeon in which the prisoner was left the night before had been found locked in the morning. No sign of violence was to be seen when we examined it in person, not a bar was broken, not a stanchion was moved: there lay the straw which had been the prisoner's bed; there stood the flagon and the bread which had been given him for his supper on the previous night. But on inquiry, we found that this prévôt, after some deep drinking, and in a state, as several persons witnessed, of stupid drunkenness, had visited the prisoner's cell at a late hour the preceding night; and we concluded that he had suffered the young burgher to slip past him unobserved before he closed the door. Whether it was so or not, none but himself can tell."

"My lord, as I before said, I will be silent on that point," replied Albert Maurice; "but the use which I made of my liberty would be quite sufficient, I should conceive, to prove that I had no very evil or dangerous designs. I hastened immediately to Gembloux, where I obtained these papers, which I now lay before the council, to establish fully the fact that I was arrested in the first instance solely for striking a soldier, who had insulted the wife of a burgher of the place; I then made all speed to Ghent, where I was sure of encountering my adversary, but where I trusted also to obtain justice."

"And the first thing you did when you were in Ghent," exclaimed Maillotin du Bac, with the angry vehemence of disappointed hatred, "was to stir up the people to tumult, to make seditious speeches in the

town-hall, to resist the lawful force sent to arrest you, and to incite the people to murder the officers that were despatched for your apprehension—Pretty proofs of innocence indeed! Well, well, the princess and the lords of the council will see what will come of it, if they suffer such doings to take place with impunity. Who will serve the state, if the state will not support them in doing their duty? The strong hand, lords, the strong hand is the only way to keep down these turbulent, disaffected burghers."

"It must be the strong hand of justice, then, prévôt, replied Imbercourt; "and let me tell you, that you yourself, by the unjust arrest of this young man, have done more to stir up the people to rebellion than the most seditious traitor that ever harangued from a market cross. Nor, sir, must you scatter such false and malicious accusations without proofs. Before I sat down here, I, with several of the other lords now present, investigated accurately what had been the conduct of this young burgher during the course of yesterday morning; and I find that, so far from his behaviour being turbulent and seditious, he acted only as a loyal subject to our lord the duke, and was one of those good merchants who drew up an address of congratulation on the news of our sovereign's safety. More, I found that, had it not been for his influence and strong exertions with the people, your lieutenant and his band, sir prévôt, would have been sacrificed to their indignation, for imprudently intruding into a privileged place, while the merchants of the good town were assembled in deliberation. Nor can any one doubt the fact, for your own lieutenant was the first to bear witness to this young citizen's generous intercession in his favour."

Maillotin du Bac set his teeth hard, and stretched out his hand upon his knee, with a sort of suppressed groan, which might proceed either from the pain of his bruises, or the disappointment of his malice. After a short pause, during which no one seemed prepared to say any thing more, either in accusation or defence, the princess herself spoke, with that sort of timid and doubtful tone which was natural in one so young, so inexperienced, and so gentle, on giving a decision upon so important a cause, although it was sufficiently evident to all what her decision must be.

"I think, my lords," she said, "after what we have

heard, there cannot be any great difference of opinion. The evidence which has been brought forward seems not only to exculpate this young gentleman from all charge whatever, but to cast the highest honour upon his character and conduct. What say you, my lords? do you not acquit him freely from all stain?"

The voices of the council were found unanimous in favour of the accused; and it was announced to him that he stood free and clear from all accusation. The princess bowed to him, as his full acquittal was declared, with a smile of gratification at the result, which sprang from a pure a noble and a gentle heart, pleased to see a fellow-creature, whose dignified deportment and graceful carriage could not but win upon the weaknesses of human nature, establish clearly a higher and more dignified title to esteem by tried virtue and integrity. There was no other feeling mingled with her smile; nor did Albert Maurice, for a moment, dream that there was; but, at the same time, it wakened a train of thoughts in his own mind both dangerous and painful. More than ever did he feel that he was born out of the station for which nature had formed his spirit; and more than ever did his heart burn to do away those grades in society, which, though the inevitable consequences of the innate differences between different men, he, from mortified pride, termed artificial distinctions, and unjust barriers between man and man. It were to inquire too curiously, perhaps, to investigate how the one sweet smile of that beautiful lip woke in the heart of the young citizen a train of such apparently abstruse thoughts. So, however, it was; and, as the doors of the audience-hall were thrown open behind him, allowing those to go forth who had gained admittance to hear his examination before the council, he bowed to the princess and the nobles present, with feelings individually more friendly to all of them, but certainly more hostile to the general system of government, and the existing institutions of society.

Still Albert Maurice entertained no presumptuous dreams in regard to Mary of Burgundy. He thought her certainly the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld. She had smiled upon him sweetly and gently. She had been present at his examination herself, though she might, notwithstanding his appeal, have left it to the decision of her council. She had done him full and im-

partial justice; and she had seemed to derive a personal pleasure from his acquittal. All this he felt strongly; and he was fond to picture from that fair face, and those soft hazel eyes, a mind and a spirit within all gentleness and excellence. He thought, too, that had mankind been in its just and natural situation, where no cold rules placed as wide a distance between different classes as if they were composed of different creatures, he might have striven to win,—ay, and he thought he might have won, that fair hand, which had held the scales of justice for him so impartially.

Such feelings, and all the many collateral thoughts to which those feelings gave rise, were busy in his breast, as he followed the good old Lord of Neufchatel towards the door. Just as he was going out, he turned to take one more glance of the princess,—the last, perhaps, he was ever to obtain; but Mary of Burgundy and her ladies had already quitted the hall, as well as his accuser, Maillotin du Bac, who had hastened away to conceal himself from popular indignation. Nothing was to be seen but one or two of the members of the council, standing together in a group at the farther end of the table, and apparently, by the gay laughter in which they were indulging, conversing over some indifferent subject. Albert Maurice turned, and strode through the antechamber, while the Lord of Neufchatel walked on before him, demonstrating, with proud courtesy, various points of feudal law to good Martin Fruse, who listened to his speech with every mark of the most deferential respect. The young citizen was just entering the outer hall, and he already heard the shouts of the people in the square, welcoming, with a glad voice, the news of his acquittal, which had preceded his own appearance, when somebody plucked him by the sleeve, and one of the officers of the household informed him, in a low tone, that the Princess Mary required his presence for a moment in private.

The heart of the young burgher beat quick; but without pause he followed the attendant, as he turned away from him, and in a moment had passed through one of the side doors into the private apartments of the palace.

CHAPTER XV.

Every one knows that, in the early dawn of a Sicilian morning, the shepherds and the watchers on the coast of the Messinese strait will sometimes behold, in the midst of the clear unclouded blue of the sky, a splendid but delusive pageant, which is seen also, though in a less vivid form, among the Hebrides. Towers and castles, domes and palaces, festivals and processions, arrayed armies and contending hosts, pass, for a few minutes, in brilliant confusion before the eyes of the beholders, and then fade away, as if the scenes of another world were, for some especial purpose, conjured up for a moment, and then withdrawn for ever from their sight.

Thus there are times, too, in the life of man, when the spirit, excited by some great and stirring passion, or by mingling with mighty and portentous events, seems to gain for a brief instant a confused but magnificent view of splendid things not yet in being. Imagination in the one case, and hope in the other, give form and distinctness to the airy images, though both are too soon doomed to fade away amid the colder realities of the stern world we dwell in.

The mind of Albert Maurice had been excited by the scenes he had just gone through; and success, without making him arrogant, had filled him full of hope. Each step that he took forward seemed but to raise him higher, and each effort of an enemy to crush him seemed, without any exertion of his own, but to clear the way before him. Such thoughts were mingling with other feelings—brought forth by the sight, and the voice, and the smile of Mary of Burgundy, when the sudden call to her presence woke him from such dreams; but woke him only to show to his mind's eye a thousand confused but bright and splendid images, as gay, as glittering, as pageant-like, but as unreal also, as the airy vision which hangs in the morning light over the Sicilian seas. Fancy at once called up every thing within the wide range of

possibility—battles and victories, and triumphant success, the shout of nations and of worlds, the sceptre, the palace, and the throne, with a thousand indistinct ideas of mighty things, danced before his eyes for a moment, with a sweeter and a brighter image, too, as the object and the end of ambition, the reward of mighty endeavour, the crowning boon of infinite success. But still he felt and knew, even while he dreamed, that it was all unreal; and, as he followed the messenger with a quick pace, the vision faded, and left him but the cold and naked truth. At length, after passing through several chambers, which flanked the hall of audience, the door of a small apartment, called the bower, was thrown open, and the young burgher stood once more before Mary of Burgundy.

One of the most painful curses of high station is that of seldom, if ever, being alone; of having no moment, except those intended for repose, in which to commune with one's own heart, without the oppression of some human eye watching the emotions of the mind as they act upon the body, and keeping sentinel over the heart's index—the face. Mary of Burgundy was not alone, though as much alone as those of her station usually are: she stood near a window, at the other side of the apartment, with her soft rounded arm and delicate hand twined in those of one of her fair attendants—Alice of Imbercourt—on whom she leaned slightly, while the Lord of Imbercourt himself stood beside her on the other hand; and, with his stately head somewhat bent, seemed, with all due reverence, to give her counsel upon some private matter of importance. Another figure was retiring from an opposite door as Albert Maurice entered; but who it was the faint glance he caught did not permit the young burgher to distinguish.

He advanced towards the spot where the princess stood, with the usual marks of ceremony and reverence; and, as he came near and bent one knee, she held out her hand for him to kiss, with a gentle smile, but with the air and demeanour of a princess.

"I congratulate you, Master Albert Maurice," she said, as soon as he had risen, "on the clear and satisfactory manner in which you have been enabled to establish your innocence; for I fear that it sometimes happens that persons accused are not able to bring forward sufficient evidence to exculpate them before their

princes, who, judging according to their best conscience, are often charged with cruelty or partiality, more from the defect of the testimony offered to them than from any desire of doing aught but justice. I therefore congratulate you most sincerely on your having had the means of establishing your innocence beyond all doubt: and I am deeply gratified myself that you have been able to remove every doubt from my own mind, as well as to satisfy my council."

"Had every person accused so gracious and impartial a judge, madam," replied the young citizen, "it were happy for the world; and, indeed, it was my full confidence in your own justice, and in that of the noble lords of the council, which made me appeal so boldly to your own decision."

"For so doing I thank you, sir," replied the princess; "and I have now sent for you to say so, as well as to speak with you on one part of your defence, which somewhat touched upon the honour of my father's justice. Although I marked it at the time, I did not choose to notice it before the many; and now, by the advice of one of my best and most faithful friends, I seek this private mode—certainly not of chiding you for what has passed your lips—but of calling to your remembrance things which might have made your words less bitter."

The princess paused for a moment, colouring slightly, with some degree of agitation, from the task thus imposed upon her, and from the long time which it required her to speak upon subjects of some political importance. She showed, indeed, no awkward incompetence, no want of mental power; but her blush and her slight embarrassment were those of her youth, of her sex, and of a delicate and feeling mind. While she paused, Albert Maurice merely bowed his head, without reply; and in a moment after she proceeded.

"I am very young, sir," she said, "and, as a woman, am of course cut off from mingling greatly with mankind. Nevertheless, as it has so unfortunately fallen out that the rule of these territories should seem to be at some time destined for a female hand, and that hand mine, I have not, of course, neglected the study of the laws and institutions, nor of the history of the dominions that may one day become my own. In speaking of the city of Namur, you named rights violated, and privileges in-

fringed, and, perhaps, alluded to some other privileges of which other towns have been deprived. Most of the events that you probably referred to took place before the period to which my own remembrance extends; but, if the historians of the land say true, no rights were ever, in any instance, arbitrarily wrenched away from the people. In all cases, if my memory serve me right, the loss of privileges was inflicted on the citizens as a punishment for some crime, for some unprovoked revolt, for some attempt to snatch the power from what they considered a weak or embarrassed hand. Such being the case, justice—both in the abstract sense of awarding punishment for evil, or in the moral policy of deterring others from crime, by the example of retributive infliction—required that the cities which had so acted should suffer a certain penalty as the consequence. That penalty has always been the loss of some of their privileges; which punishment has uniformly been received by them as most merciful, at the time when detected treason or suppressed revolt brought upon them the wrath, and placed them at the mercy, of a powerful prince. Nor, let me say, can they hope to regain the privileges they have lost, except by a calm and tranquil obedience, or some service rendered, which may merit reward and confidence."

She paused, as if for reply; but Albert Maurice remained silent. In truth, he felt no small difficulty in so shaping his answer as not to swerve from the truths indelibly written in his own heart, and yet not to hurt the feelings, or lower himself in the esteem, of one whose good opinion had become, he knew not why, of more consequence in his eyes than mortal opinion had ever been before. He felt, too, that the princess spoke according to the ideas and sentiments of her rank and of her times; while he himself bore within his bosom the feelings of his own class, and the thoughts of times long gone, when liberty was eloquent and powerful.

Although between such different principles there was a gulf as deep as the abyss, still love might span it with a bridge, which, like that that leads to the Moslem paradise, is finer than a famished spider's thread. But it were wrong to say he loved. Oh, no! he would have shrunk from so idle a thought, had it come upon him in a tangible shape. Yet there was something growing upon his heart which softened it towards Mary of Bur-

gundy—which rendered it unwilling to hurt her feelings —which made it timid of offending her, though the eye of the proudest sovereign that ever trod the earth would not have caused it to quail for an instant.

The Lord of Imbercourt saw more clearly into the character of the man, and knew more of the circumstances of the times, than the princess he had staid to counsel; and perceiving that the young citizen was not about to reply, he spoke a few words in addition to that which Mary had advanced, taking a wider ground than she had assumed, and examining the subject more as a philosopher than either a feudal noble or the counsellor of an absolute prince. He spoke of the necessity of order and good government, for the peace and happiness of the people themselves; he pointed out that tranquillity and general confidence were absolutely necessary to industry, both commercial and productive; and he showed, with the voice of years and experience, that turbulence and discontent were ruinous to any nation, but in a tenfold degree ruinous to a commercial people. "Believe me, Master Albert Maurice," he added, "that just in the same proportion that the man is to be blest, who teaches a people to improve their moral state, to cultivate their intellects, and to extend their knowledge and resources,—in the same degree is he to be hated and despised who teaches them to be discontented with their condition."

He paused; and Albert Maurice replied with more calm firmness than he could, perhaps, have shown, had he answered the princess, "I will not, my lord, attempt to use towards you that ordinary fallacy which, in fact, arises only in the imperfection of language, namely, that people must be rendered discontented with their condition, in order to gain the desire of changing it. I know and feel, that, though we have not a word exactly to express it, there is an immense difference between discontent with our present state, and the calm desire of improving it. But still, it may be doubted whether the mind of man, especially in multitudes, does not require some more universal and potent stimulus to carry it generally forward to great improvements, than the slow progress of increasing knowledge can afford."

"No, no, indeed," replied Imbercourt; "the potent stimulus is like too much wine, that only maddens for the time, and then leaves every nerve more feeble and

relaxed thereafter. No, no: administer good plain and wholesome food to the social as well as to the human body; and, growing in strength and performing all its function correctly, it will gain, by the same calm and easy degrees, the desire and the power of obtaining that which is best adapted to its state."

Albert Maurice felt that there was truth in what the Lord of Imbercourt advanced; but, nevertheless, between them there still existed a thousand differences of opinion, which would have required an infinite change of circumstances to have removed. The differences of their age, of their station, of their education, and of their habits, were all as much opposed to a coincidence of thought, as the difference of their natural characters itself; and the only point of resemblance between the young citizen and the high-born noble—namely, the fine aspirations and elegant feelings which raised the former above the generality of his class—naturally tended to make him detest those laws of society which held him down in a rank below that for which he was fitted, and look with disgust upon those who maintained them as a barrier against him. At the same time he was conscious that in his bosom there might be some feelings not entirely patriotic, or, at least, he felt afraid that it was so; and perceiving, also, that the arguments which were addressed to him were far more liberal and plausible than those usually held by the class to which the Lord of Imbercourt belonged, he did not choose to enter into a further discussion, which might either shake his own determinations, or expose the views on which he acted to those who would take means to foil his designs.

"I am, of course, incompetent, my lord," he replied, "to argue with an experienced statesman like yourself, on subjects which you must have had a much greater opportunity of examining than I can have had."

Imbercourt watched his countenance during this brief reply; and he was too much versed in the ways of men to be deceived by its apparent modesty. He saw, and saw clearly, that the high and flashing spirit, the keen and acute mind, which the young burgher had displayed at the examination before the council—and which, indeed, had been reported long before to the ministers of the Duke of Burgundy—was curbed and restrained on the present occasion; and he easily divined some

of the motives which created such reserve. He saw, too, that it would be necessary to make use of other inducements than those of argument for the purpose of detaching the young citizen from the factious party in Flanders, and of preventing him from giving to their designs the consolidation, the direction, and the vigour which such a mind as his might bestow.

Neither had the slight shade of emotion which had passed over the countenance of Albert Maurice, when addressed by the princess, escaped his experienced eye; and, though far too proud and aristocratic in his own nature ever to dream that a burgher of Ghent could indulge in the very thought of love towards the heiress of the land, he was sufficiently chivalrous in his own mind to believe, that a smile from such fair lips, a word from so sweet a voice, might bend a man on whom arguments would prove all useless. He turned, therefore, to the princess, with a smile, saying, "Well, let us not reason of the past; I think, madam, that you had something to say to this young gentleman concerning the future; and, as it could come with full effect from no lips but yours, I pray you communicate it to him yourself."

"Most willingly will I do so," replied Mary of Burgundy; "and I am sure that I shall not speak in vain. I have heard, and, indeed, I know, Master Albert Maurice, that no man in the good city of Ghent possesses so much influence as yourself with the merchants and people of the good towns. My father being now absent, and likely, I fear, to remain so for some time,—as my dear and excellent stepdame, Margaret his duchess, has been called to join him at Dijon,—and the government of Flanders resting in my weak hands, I am anxious, most anxious, to preserve the country, and especially this city of Ghent—which," she added with a smile, "has not in all times been famous for its orderly disposition—in peace and tranquillity during my temporary government, which, I pray, God shorten. My request to you, therefore, is, that you will use your best endeavours to still all irritation, to calm all disposition to tumult, and to maintain in the people a spirit of order and quiet. May I trust that you will do so?"

The blood rushed up to the temples of the young citizen with fearful force; and the pain that he expe-

rienced for a few moments, till he had determined upon his reply, would be difficult to describe. At length he answered, though with some hesitation.

"Madam," he said, "I feel assured that, under your sway, however long the government of Flanders may be delegated to you by your father, no infraction of the people's rights, no blow at the privileges of the good towns, will or can take place. Under this conviction, I will willingly promise what you demand, though, in truth, you attribute to me much greater influence than I possess. At the same time, madam, let me pray you to remember, that if—which God forbid!—evil ministers or tyrannical officers should, as sometimes happens, wrong their master, by trampling on his subjects, I cannot, and I will not, bind myself to support such things, or to oppose my countrymen in seeking to right themselves."

"God forbid, indeed," exclaimed Mary, eagerly, "that you should ever be put to such a trial! Indeed, young gentleman, indeed," she added, with her whole beautiful countenance glowing with enthusiasm, "to merit and to win my people's love, to heal all feuds, to bind up every wound, to wipe the eyes that weep, to raise up the oppressed, to uphold and to promote the virtuous, and to guard the feeble and defenceless, would be the first wish and thought of Mary of Burgundy, were she queen of one-half the world."

"Madam, I believe it!—from my heart I believe it!" replied Albert Maurice, catching the enthusiasm of her tone; "and may God bless and prosper you in the performance of so noble an intention!"

As he spoke, he felt that the presence of that fair being had become more dangerous to his resolutions and purposes, perhaps even to his peace, than he could have imagined possible; and, afraid that at every word he might promise more than circumstances might permit him to perform, or bind himself so strictly that his duty to his country would be lost,—he paused, and drew a step back, in order to take his leave. The princess saw the movement, and bowed her head, to signify that he was at liberty to depart. "Farewell, sir," she said; "and do not forget the promise you have made."

The young citizen bowed, and retired; and, while Mary remained in deep and anxious conversation with Imbercourt, he made his way back to the antechamber

of the audience-hall, which was now empty, and thence into the court of the palace, where he was joined by his uncle Martin Fruse; and found the Lord of Neufchatel in the act of mounting his horse. The old nobleman paused for a moment, to read the young citizen a long and stately lecture upon the impropriety of leaving, as he had done, those who had accompanied him to the council-chamber, the moment that the examination was over. The mind of Albert Maurice, however, and his heart, were busied about far other things; and the reproof of the old cavalier fell upon a somewhat dull and inattentive ear. He answered with some formal words of apology, stating that he had been called away unexpectedly; and then, with more energy and feeling, expressed his gratitude for the kindness and services which the Lord of Neufchatel had rendered him.

"Well, well, no more of that!" cried the old lord; "never shall it be said that I shrank from the side of an oppressed man, be he noble or not noble. Happy I am that you have so fully cleared yourself, Master Albert Maurice; and whenever the good citizens of Ghent require such aid and advice concerning matters of state and feudal law as I, from my old acquaintance with courts and camps, can give, let them come freely to consult me, without fear or bashfulness; that is to say, while I am in the city; for in ten days' time I go to join the camp, and once more, though the hand be feeble, and the head be gray, to lay lance in rest for Burgundy. However, absent or present, I shall always be happy to do what I can for the good city of Ghent."

Albert Maurice bowed, and his uncle bowed low; and, mounting his horse, though with somewhat less alacrity than he had done in his youthful days, the Lord of Neufchatel quitted the palace court, and went bowing and nodding through the crowds assembled without. Albert Maurice and his uncle then followed, through the grim lanes of soldiery that still occupied the interior of the square. The appearance of the young citizen, after his exculpation, was instantly hailed by the multitudes without, as a sort of popular triumph; and, amid shouts of joy and congratulation, he was conducted safely to his own dwelling.

CHAPTER XVI.

We must now carry the reader's mind forward to a day a little in advance of that which we last noticed.

It was towards that period of the year which the French call the *short summer of St. Martin*, from the fact of a few lingering bright days of sunshiny sweetness breaking in upon the autumn, as a memorial of the warmer season gone before. The sky was all full of light, and the air full of heat; and the grand masses of high gray clouds that occasionally floated over the sun were hailed gladly for their soft cool shadow, although the day was the eleventh of November. Sweeping over the prospect, like the mighty but indistinct images of great things and splendid purposes that sometimes cross a powerful but imaginative mind, the shadows of the clouds moved slow over hill and dale, field and forest. Now they cast large masses of the woods into dark and gloomy shade, and left the rising grounds around to stand forth in light and sparkling brightness, giving no bad image of the dark memories that are in every heart, surrounded but not effaced by after joys. Now they floated soft upon the mountains, spreading an airy purple over each dell and cavity; while, pouring into the midst of the valley, the bright orb of day lighted up tower, and town, and farm, and hamlet, and village spire, as hope lights up the existence of man, even while the many clouds of fate hang their heaviest shadows on the prospect round about him. The harmonious hue of autumn, too, was over all the world. Russet was the livery of the year; and the brown fields, preparing for the sower, offered only a deeper hue of the same colour, which, though varied through a thousand shades, still painted every tree throughout the woods, and sobered down even the grassy meadows with a tint far different from that of spring. The sky, with the sunshine that it contained, was all summer; but the aspect of every thing that it looked upon spoke of autumn sinking fast into the arms of winter.

Such was the scene upon the banks of the little river

Geete, when a party, whose bright dresses and active movements spoke sport and gayety, rode up the windings of the river, not far from the place where now stands the little hamlet of Sodoigne. No village, however, stood there then; and the banks of the stream were bordered for some miles with green meadows, not above two or three hundred yards in breadth. This rich pasture was bounded to the eastward by the forest of Hannut, which swept in irregular masses along the whole course of the river, and was confined on the other hand by the low but broken banks of the watercourse, sometimes, in the steepest part, lined with bushes, which dipped their very branches in the current, but more often—where the turf and the stream were nearly upon a level—fringed with long green flags and other water-plants.

The party who cantered lightly along the meadows consisted of eight persons, of whom three were females; and each of the latter upon her hand bore the glove and falcon, which showed the object of their expedition. The first in state, in loveliness, and in grace was Mary of Burgundy, mounted on a beautiful white horse, adorned with many a goodly trapping, and which, though full of fire and life, she managed with that easy and graceful horsemanship for which she was famous, and which, unhappily, in after years, led to that fatal accident* which deprived the world of one of its brightest ornaments By her side rode the fair Alice of Imbercourt, her favourite friend and nearest attendant; while another young lady, of inferior rank, but still of noble birth, followed a step behind, somewhat embarrassed by the high spirit of her horse, which she managed well, but with less dexterity than the other two. An elderly gentleman, of mild, complacent, and courtly manners, followed the ladies as their principal attendant; while, of the other four, two habited in green, and furnished with long poles for beating the bushes, together with lures, spare jesses, hoods, and bells, at once showed themselves as official falconers; and the two who brought up the rear, though armed with a degree of precaution that was very necessary in that day, appeared what they really were, namely, simple grooms.

There is something in the excitement of quick riding

* She died a few years after this period, in consequence of a fall occasioned by her horse taking fright, while out falconing.

totally obnoxious to both fear and sadness. It is scarcely possible to conceive a person galloping easily along upon a spirited horse, without feeling his confidence and hope renewed, in some degree, whatever may be the circumstances of his situation. Thus, though in the heart of Mary of Burgundy there was many a memory of painful feelings, of disappointed hopes, and crushed affections; and though across her mind, whenever she suffered it to rest upon the future, would come dark and painful apprehensions,—still the excitement of the sport, the beauty of the day, and the glow of exercise, had given to her heart a flow of high spirits that she had not known for many a day. Her mirth, indeed, was never overpowering, and if it reached the bounds of cheerfulness, it seldom went beyond.

Now, however, as they rode along by the banks of the stream, and as the falconers beat the bushes to rouse the objects of their chase, she jested in a tone of gentle gayety with the fair girl who accompanied her, upon all those matters which, to the heart of woman, are the important things of life.

Alice of Imbercourt, on her part, maintained the conversation with the same spirit, jested with like good-humoured malice with the princess, and was never without an answer at her need, although she did not for a moment forget, that however high her own rank, Mary of Burgundy held a higher, nor ever failed to mingle with her speech so much of reverence as to show that she had not forgot the distinction.

"Nay, nay, own, dear Alice," exclaimed the princess, in reply to something that had passed before, "that day by day you have been bringing me nearer and nearer to a certain castle in the wood; and, in truth, I think that you must have got the good lord your father to be a confederate in your plot."

"Good sooth, dear lady," replied Alice, "a happy thing were it for us poor women if all fathers were so complacent: I know well where one little heart would be in that case;" and she looked up with an arch smile in the face of the princess.

However strongly prudence may enjoin them to be silent themselves, all women feel more or less pleasure when the conversation is brought near the subject of their loves. Though Mary of Burgundy would not herself say one word that she could help, upon the feelings

of her own heart, even to so dear and faithful a friend as Alice of Imbercourt, yet she felt no displeasure when the gay girl's tongue touched upon the subject of her affections, although clouds and darkness hung over the prospect, and all hope of their gratification was but faint indeed. At the same time she was, perhaps, a little fearful of the topic ever being carried too far, and, therefore, after a smile, in which melancholy mingled, in some degree, with pleasure, she returned to her own jest with her fair follower, without adding one word more to a subject on which both, in happier circumstances, might have been well pleased to speak more freely.

"Nay, nay, Alice," she exclaimed, "that was an artful turn, my sweet friend: but you shall not escape so readily. Tell me, did you not put it in your father's head, to think what a fine thing it would be for me to visit all the different towns in Flanders, and win the love of the good burghers? And did you not yourself lay out the very plan of our journey from Ghent to Alost, and thence to Brussels, and thence to Louvaine, and thence to Tirlemont? And have you not kept me three full days at Tirlemont; and, at last, have you not brought me up the fair river Geete, with our hawks upon our hands, and nobody to watch us, till we are within a league or two of this same castle of Hannut?—Fy, Alice! fy! it is a decided conspiracy!"

Alice laughed gayly, and replied, "Well, lady, if it can be proved, even by the best logic of your pretty lips, that I do wish to see my lover, I know no woman, that has one, who does not do so too, from the farmer's milkmaid, with her pail upon head, to the princess of Burgundy, on her white Spanish jennet."

Mary laughed and sighed. "You own it, then," she answered: "I thought, when last night you were striving hard to persuade me to visit the castle of Hannut, and have my future fate laid bare by the dark and awful skill of this learned uncle of yours, that there was a leaf in the book of fortune, or rather in the book of life, that you would well like to read for yourself. But tell me, Alice," she added, more seriously, "tell me something more of this lover, to whom, it seems, you are affianced. There appears some mystery about him, and you, of course, must know more of him than any one else."

"Nay, quite the contrary, my dear lady and mistress,"

replied Alice of Imbercourt; "that shows how little you know of the sad race called men. His being my lover is the very reason, of all others, why I should know less of him than any other person."

"How so?" demanded the princess, with a look of surprise.

"Why, simply because, from the moment he becomes my lover," replied Alice of Imbercourt, "he takes the very best possible care to hide every evil quality in his nature and disposition, upon the full and preconcerted plan of not letting me see any one of them till such time as he is my husband; then, out they come! But that is not all," she continued; "that would only hide a part of his character: but, at the same time that he takes these precautions, I, on my part, like every wise woman, make up my mind on no account whatever to see any little fault or failing that he may accidentally display—at least till such time as he is my husband. Then, of course, when nothing more is to be gained or lost, I shall, beyond doubt, take as much pains to find them out as another, and he will take as little to hide them."

"That is a bad plan, Alice," replied the princess; "that is a bad plan; find out the faults, if you can, in the lover, while your hand is your own, and your will is free. See them not at all in your husband; for blindness in such a case is woman's best policy. But you mistake me, Alice; it was not of his mind I spoke, but of his situation; for, when questioning my Lord of Imbercourt the other day, he called him your uncle's nephew: now, none of our wise heralds ever heard, it seems, of such a nephew."

A slight blush came up into the cheek of Alice as the princess spoke; but she replied frankly, "In truth, dear lady, I know nothing on that score; and upon such subjects I have ever thought that if my father was satisfied, I had no reason to complain. All I know is, that my cousin Hugh was brought up at the court of France,—has fought in the civil wars of England, and under Galeas, Duke of Milan,—has gained honour, and knighthood, and glory in the field,—is gentle, and kind, and tender, and affectionate to me; and is—" she added, with a laugh and a blush at the praises which she was pouring forth, and which she felt must betray the whole secret of her heart, but which yet she could not or would not restrain,—"and is as handsome a man, and

as graceful a cavalier, as ever entered hall or mounted horse."

The princess smiled, and answered, "Well, well, if he be all that, fair Alice, you are right—quite right—to ask no further questions. But how is it, good Bartholomew," she cried, turning to one of the falconers,—"but how is it? can you find no bird, in all the length of this fair stream, for us to fly our hawks?"

"So please your grace," replied the man, "the air is so sultry that the herons will hardly wade where there is no shelter; but up beyond those bushes, where the bank with its long sedges jets out into the stream, I doubt not we may raise something yet."

The whole party accordingly rode on; and the judgment of the experienced falconer was found quite right. Under the cool shadow of the bank, one of the feathered fishermen had advanced some way, with his long legs, and, taking fright at the noise of the horses, he stretched forth his neck, gathered the air under his wings, and soared up at about the distance of twenty or thirty yards from the approaching party. The birds were instantly cast from the wrists of the ladies: the heron, finding himself pursued, and apparently a crafty old bird, strove to beat to windward of the hawks, flying as rapidly as possible, and yet keeping himself prepared for sudden defence. All the horses were put to full speed, and in a moment the whole scene became one of cry and confusion.

"Call the merlin up the wind! Call the merlin up the wind!" cried the princess to the chief falconer! "See! see! he is towering; he will miss his stoop!"

"So ho! woa ho!" cried the falconer, with a loud whistle: "he will make his point yet, your grace." But the heron, finding himself overreached, made a dip, skimmed, and evaded the fall or stoop of the falcon, which, being a young bird, had endeavoured to strike it at once, without being perfectly sure of its aim. The clamour and the galloping now became more eager than ever, the bird making directly for the wood, which it seemed likely to gain, notwithstanding the efforts of its pursuers.

The meadow was the finest even ground that could be conceived for such sport; and the rein being freely given to each horse, the whole party dashed on at full speed, without seeing, or caring for, the massy clouds, that,

sweeping together overhead, directly in the face of a light and flickering wind, that was blowing from the north-west, seemed to threaten a storm of some kind. The air, too, had that sultry oppressive weight which one often feels in the neighbourhood of a great forest; and the horses—animals peculiarly susceptible to the feeling produced by a quantity of electricity in the atmosphere—seemed more eager and fiery than usual, and were soon in a complete lather of foam.

The gray merlin which had been carried by Mary of Burgundy retrieved the error of its first eagerness, and cutting between the heron and the wood, keep it off for some time over the meadow and the stream. The sport was thus in its highest point of interest, and the horses in full career, when a sudden flash of lightning broke across their path, and startled the whole party. Each horse involuntarily recoiled. The princess and Alice of Im bercourt both kept their seats, but the young lady who followed them, less skilful in her management, was thrown violently to the ground; while her horse, wild with fright, dashed madly across the meadow, and plunged into the stream. The falconers rode forward to whistle back their hawks—the service most important in their eyes,—and one of the grooms galloped after the frightened horse, in order to catch him ere he was irrecoverably lost. But the rest of the party, instantly dismounting, surrounded the poor girl who had met with the accident, whom they found severely bruised, but not otherwise dangerously hurt. She complained bitterly, however, and, as if conscious that she was not a very interesting person otherwise, made the most of her misfortune to engross attention.

The horse and the hawks were soon recovered, but it became now the question, what was to be the course of their further proceedings. Large drops of rain were beginning to fall—every thing portended a tremendous storm. The young lady who had fallen was too much bruised to sit her horse with ease, and was, or appeared to be, too much terrified to attempt it again. She nevertheless entreated the princess and her companions to return as fast as possible towards Tirlemont, leaving her where she was, with some one to protect her, and to send a litter from the town to bring her home. But to this the princess would by no means consent; and it having been suggested by one of the

grooms, who knew the country well, that at the distance of about half a mile in the wood there was a small chapel dedicated to Notre Dame du bon Secours, it was determined that the whole party should proceed thither, and wait till the storm was over, or till one of the attendants could procure litters for the ladies from Tirlemont.

They accordingly proceeded on their way, under the guidance of the groom, who alone knew the situation of the chapel; and, skirting round under the branches of the taller trees, endeavoured to obtain shelter on their way from the large drops of rain that, slow and heavy, but far apart, seemed scarcely so much to fall as to be cast with violence from the heaven to the earth. The clouds, in the mean time, came rolling slowly up, seeming to congregate over the forest from every part of the sky; but still it was some minutes before another flash of lightning followed the first, which had startled their horses, and the whole party had reached the glade in the wood which the groom assured them led direct to the chapel, ere a second bright blaze broke across the gloomy air, now shadowed into a kind of midday twilight by the dull, thick, leaden clouds above. The roar of the thunder followed a few seconds after; and though it was evident that the storm had not reached that degree of intensity which it was destined soon to attain, the princess and her attendants did not neglect the warning, but hastened on as rapidly as possible, though the long grass, cut merely by the tracks of wood-carts, and mingled thickly with brambles and many sorts of weeds, impeded them greatly on their way.

The road—if the glade or opening in the forest could so be called—led on in that straight line of direct progression which seems to have been the original plan of road-making in most countries, proceeding with a proud disdain of obstacles and difficulties, into the deepest valleys, and up the sides of the steepest hills, without one effort by sweep or turn of any kind to avoid either. Thus, in a few minutes after the entrance of the princess's party into the forest, the groom led the way over the side of a hill, down the steep descent of which the trunks and arching boughs of the trees might be seen in long perspective, forming a regular alley, filled with a kind of dim and misty light. At the end of the descent, however, the trees, in some degree, broke away

to the westward, and a steep hill rose suddenly before the travellers, which seemed, at its original formation, to have started up so abruptly as to have shaken a part of the primeval forest from one of its sides. The other side was clothed with tall trees to the very top. Over the shoulder of this hill,—just between the part which remained wooded, and the part which, sloping down to the forest below, lay for the distance of several acres, either entirely bare or merely covered with scattered brushwood,—the road, now assuming a sandy appearance, climbed straight up to a spot where a small building with a conical roof was seen standing out from the dark wood, at the very top of the rise, and cutting sharp upon a gleam of yellow light, which—dimmed by the falling shower, and fast closing up under the gathering clouds—yet lingered in the western sky.

The sight of the chapel, for so it was, gave fresh vigour to all the party; and Mary, with her followers, hastened up, and reached the little shrine before another flash of lightning took place. The chapel, as usual with such buildings in that age, was constructed for the mere purpose of affording a temporary refuge to the benighted or storm-staid traveller, or of giving the pious and devout an opportunity of offering up their prayers or thanksgivings for a favourable journey begun or completed, before an image of the Virgin, which filled a niche in the far part of the edifice, protected from profaning hands by a strong grating of iron. Whether the building itself was kept up by casual donations, or by some small endowment, I do not know; but, at all events, the funds which supported it were too small for the maintenance of an officiating priest; and hermits, who had occasionally supplied the place in former ages, were now becoming "of the rare birds of the earth," at least in the north of Europe. Thus the chapel was totally vacant when the princess and her attendants reached it; and after offering up a prayer at the shrine, while one of the grooms was despatched to Tirlemont, to give notice of Mary's situation, the most courageous of the party which remained placed themselves at the door of the little building, to watch the progress of the approaching storm. As no one dreamed of profaning the sanctity of the place, by making it a shelter for their horses, the grooms received orders to tie them as

strongly as possible under some of the neighbouring trees; and one was thus secured under a large elm, which rose a few yards in advance of the chapel.

The commanding situation of the building, being pitched high up on one of the most elevated hills of the forest, gave a wide view over the country around, and afforded one of the most beautiful forest scenes that the mind of man can imagine. First, beyond the little sandy road by the side of which the chapel stood, extended, as I have before said, several acres of broken mountain turf, sloping down with a considerable descent, and only interrupted here and there by a solitary tree, or a clump of bushes. Beyond it, again, the eye wandered over many miles of rich woodland, clothed in all the splendid hues of autumn, from the dark shadowy evergreen to the bright golden yellow of the sear aspen; and where the ocean of woods ended, it caught the faint blue lines of a level country beyond.

At the time I speak of, the sky was full of clouds, and the yellow light which had struggled for a time to keep its place in the heavens was now totally obscured. Large dull masses, as hard and defined as if formed of some half-molten metal, rolled slowly along the heavens, while across them floated far more rapidly some light fleecy vapours of a whitish gray. From the far extreme of these clouds was seen pouring, in long straight lines, the heavy shower—in some places so dark as totally to obscure every thing beyond; but in other spots so thin and clear, that through the lines of rain the eye caught the prospect of a bright and sunshiny country, over which the clouds had not yet extended themselves,—not unlike the distant view of bright scenes which the unquelled hopes of early life still show us through the tears and storms that at times beset our youth.

Each moment seemed to add something to the gloom of the sky; and scarcely were the party well housed when another bright flash, followed close by the roar of the thunder, passed eagerly over the scene. The young lady who had fallen from her horse remained close to the shrine; but Mary of Burgundy, with her arm through that of Alice of Imbercourt, still stood by the door, looking out upon the prospect below them. The last flash of lightning, however, was so near, that Mary's eye caught a small thin line of pale-coloured but excessively vivid

light, which seemed to dart like a fiery serpent between herself and the near tree, under which one of the horses was tied.

"Alice, I will look no more," she said: "that flash was so near it made me giddy;" and, withdrawing her arm, she retired into the farther part of the chapel, and closed another small door which opened from the right-hand side of the shrine into the forest behind the building.

"You are not afraid, lady!" said Alice, with a smile.

"No, certainly not afraid," replied Mary; "for I know that He whose weapon is the lightning can strike as well in the palace or the tower as in the open field; but still it is useless to deny that there is something very awful in the sights and sounds of such a storm as this. It seems as if one were in the presence, and heard the voice, of the Almighty."

"It is very grand," replied Alice of Imbercourt; "but from my youth I have been taught to look upon the storm as the finest spectacle in nature; and I would rather see the lightnings go tilting on their fiery horses through the sky, and hear the roaring trumpets of the thunder, than sit in the gayest pavilion that ever was stretched with hands, to witness the brightest tournament that ever monarch gave."

"You are poetical, Alice," cried the princess; "had old George Chatelain been here, he would have made fine verses out of that speech—but, gracious heaven, what a flash!"

As she spoke there came, indeed, one of those tremendous flashes of lightning that literally wrap the whole sky in flame, and for the brief space that it endured, lighted up every part of the inside of the chapel with a brightness that was painful to the eye. At the same time Alice, who still stood by the door, saw clearly the brighter waving line of more intense fire, which accompanied the broad flash, dart from a spot nearly above their heads, and, streaming downward with unequalled rapidity, strike one of the noblest trees on the edge of the wood below, and tear it in one moment into atoms. She almost fancied she could hear the rending groan of the stout oak, as it was shivered by the bolt of heaven; but nearly in the same instant the thunder followed, with a sound as if a thousand rocks had been cast on the roof above their heads; and another and

another flash succeeded before the report of the first had died away. Then came a momentary pause—calm, heavy, and silent, without a breath of air to stir the boughs, or to relieve the sultry oppressiveness of the atmosphere; and without a sound, save the fall of an occasional drop of rain. The duration of this state of repose was but brief. The whole air over the forest seemed surcharged with electricity; and in a moment after, with a loud whizzing noise, not unlike that of a musket-bullet when it passes near the head, a large ball of fire rushed rapidly past the chapel, in a line raised not more than a few yards above the ground, and pitched upon the point of a rock at a little distance below, where, after quivering and wavering for a moment, it broke into a thousand fragments, with a loud explosion, and vanished entirely. The lightning and the thunder now succeeded each other so rapidly that there seemed scarcely an instant's interval; and flash after flash, roar after roar, continued without intermission, while every now and then the sight of a tree rent to atoms in the distant prospect marked the work of the lightning; and the forest, and the rocks, and the hills echoed and re-echoed the thunder, so that the sound became absolutely unceasing.

This had continued for about half an hour, and still Alice of Imbercourt had remained gazing out upon the scene, as well as the old cavalier, who accompanied them as their principal attendant, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Good God! how extraordinary! There seems to be a thick cloud gathering upon the edge of the wood, and rolling up the hill towards us, and sweeping the ground as it comes. Holy Virgin! the lightning is flashing out of it like that from the sky! This is very terrible indeed!"

"Come back, Alice, I beseech—I entreat!" exclaimed the princess: "you may lose your sight or your life—you are tempting your fate."

But Alice did not seem to hear, for she still continued gazing out from the door, although it was very evident that she now had also taken alarm.

"Now, gracious God! be merciful unto us," she exclaimed; "for this is the most terrible thing I ever saw! It is fast rolling up the hill!"

"Come away, lady, come away," cried the old cavalier, seizing her by the arm, and leading her from the

door; "this is no sight to look upon;" and he drew her back towards the princess.

Alice once more turned her head to gaze, and then, as if overcome with what she saw, she cast herself down upon her knees, throwing her arms around Mary, as if to protect her from the approaching destruction, exclaiming, "Oh, my princess! my princess! God protect thee in this terrible hour!"

Mary's hand was very cold; but in the moment of great danger she showed herself more calm and firm than her more daring companion. "God will protect me," she said, in a soft low voice, "if such be His good pleasure; and if not, His will be done."

As she spoke, a tremendous flash illuminated the whole of the inside of the building, accompanied—not followed—by a crash, as if two worlds had been hurled together in their course through space.

The eyes of every one in the chapel, it is probable, were closed at that moment, for no one saw the small door by the side of the shrine thrown open. But the first who looked up was Mary of Burgundy; and a sudden cry, as she did so, called the attention of all the rest. They instantly perceived the cause of the princess's surprise and alarm; for close beside her, in the midst of the chapel, stood a tall powerful man, habited in the ordinary equipment of a man-at-arms of that day; with the unusual circumstance, however, of every part of his garb being of a peculiar shade of green; which colour was also predominant in the dress of half a dozen others who appeared at the door by the shrine.

He gave no one time to express their surprise. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "do you not see the ground-lightning coming up the hill! Fly, fly for your lives; it will be over the chapel in a moment. Matthew, catch up some of the women. Karl, take that one that has fainted. Let the men follow me as fast as possible, and we shall soon be out of the direction it is taking."

So saying, and without further ceremony, he caught up Alice of Imbercourt in his powerful arms. One of his companions lifted the princess, and another raised the form of the young lady who had fallen from her horse in the morning, and whose terror had now cast her into a swoon; and, darting through the door by which they had entered, the Vert Gallant of Hannut and his companions passed out into that part of the forest

which swept up to the back of the chapel. Striking on as fast as possible towards the east, he took his way over the other edge of the hill, in a direction opposite to that in which Alice had been looking. The lightning flashed around them as they went, the thunder roared loud at every step, and the rain, which had ceased for a time, began again to drop, at first slowly, but after a few minutes in a more heavy and continuous shower, which, pattering thick through the withered leaves of the wood, drenched the unfortunate hawking-party to the skin.

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed the Vert Gallant: "this rain will drown yon cursed cloud, and we shall get rid of the ground-lightning."

These were the only words he spoke; but, with rapid steps, he continued to bear on his fair burden for nearly a quarter of an hour, with apparently the same ease, and in somewhat of the same position, that a mother carries her child. Two of his sturdy companions followed loaded in the same way; and so complete was the helpless terror of the whole party who had accompanied Mary of Burgundy, that they yielded themselves passively, and without a word of inquiry, to the guidance of the green riders; a body of men who acknowledged no law, though a sort of generous and chivalric spirit among themselves seemed, in some degree, to supply the place of the authority they had cast off. It is true, indeed, that resistance or question would have been in vain; for the superior numbers of these free gentlemen of the forest set at defiance all opposition on the part of the princess's attendants, and a sort of taciturnity seemed to reign among them which did not at all encourage inquiry.

After proceeding steadily and rapidly for the space of time above mentioned, over a rough and uneven road, sometimes down the side of a wooded hill, where no unpractised foot could have kept its hold—sometimes through deep ravines, which the torrents of rain that were now falling had converted into watercourses—sometimes over the trunks of trees that had been felled and shattered by the fire of heaven—with the lightning flashing round their heads, and the thunder rolling above them, the Vert Gallant and his companions at length reached a deep dell, from one side of which rose up a

steep and rocky bank, forming the base of the hill which they had just descended.

At the height of a few yards above the bottom of the valley, which was itself marshy and filled with long flags and rushes, was the mouth of a low-browed cave, to which the Vert Gallant immediately directed his steps. He was obliged to bow his head to enter; but within it became more lofty; and though it did not run above nine or ten yards into the mountain, the cavity afforded a complete shelter from the storm and rain. The moment he had entered, the leader of the free companions gently freed Alice from his arms; and then, in a low and respectful voice he said, "You will here, fair ladies, find some security. Keep as far as you can from the mouth of the cave, and there is little fear of any danger. You, sirs," he continued, in a sterner tone, turning to the male followers of the princess, "should have known better than to have placed this lady,—who, if I judge right, must be an object of no small solicitude to every subject of the house of Burgundy,—in the most exposed and dangerous situation of the whole forest."

"Good faith, Sir Green Knight," said the old gentleman who had accompanied the princess, "we certainly did not know that it was so dangerous, or we should neither have placed her in it nor ourselves, as you may well suppose. And now, sir," he continued, with a voice the slight tremulousness of whose tone showed that he was not without some apprehensions of another kind—"and now, sir, that you have the lady in your power—be she princess or not—I trust that you will deal fairly and honourably with her. Our purses are of course at your disposal, as well as our jewels, &c.; but I give you notice that—"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the Vert Gallant, the beaver of whose helmet was still down, "talk not to me of purses, sir, and jewels!—Madam," he continued, turning to the princess, "suffer not, I beseech you, the vain and vulgar fears of this old man to affect you for a moment: the Vert Gallant of Hannut takes no purses from wandering travellers, nor draws the sword against ladies, far less against the Princess of Burgundy. Rest here in safety, with your fair companions," he added, turning slightly towards Alice of Imbercourt; "and we, who have brought you hither, and have been your unseen attendants ever since you were flying your hawks by the side

of the river, will guard you as well, or better, than if you were in your father's palace."

"I owe you many thanks, sir," replied Mary; "more, indeed, than I can at present express; for this dreadful storm has left my ideas somewhat confused. However, I am satisfied that to your prompt assistance I stand indebted for my life."

"Perhaps, madam, you do," replied the Vert Gallant; "for I feel convinced that, had that cloud reached the chapel before you quitted it, the coronet of Burgundy would be now without an heiress. Think me not ungenerous, madam," he added, "if I ask a boon in return. It is this—that if, some day, I should need your voice to support my petition with your father—or if you should at the time hold the reins of government yourself, when I may have occasion to make a request before the chair of Burgundy—you will give me your influence in the one case, or grant my desire in the other."

There was something in the tone and in the manner of the speaker at once so gentle and so lofty, that Mary of Burgundy could not but think that his present adventurous life must be one more of necessity than of choice; and she doubted not that the petition to which he alluded must be for pardon for his past offences. She gazed at him for a moment or two before she replied, as he stood towering above the seven or eight strong men who accompanied him, and who had now grouped themselves round the mouth of the cave, watching, as it appeared, every word of their leader's mouth with a sort of reverential attention.

"If it be wrong, sir," she replied, "for simple individuals to make rash promises, it is still more so for princes. But where gratitude, such as I owe you, is concerned, even prudence might be ungenerous. I must qualify, however, in some degree, the promise you desire, and say, that if your request, when it is made, prove nothing contrary to my own honour or dignity, I will give it all my influence with my father, should it depend upon him; or grant it myself, should it depend upon me. Does that satisfy you?"

"Most fully, madam," replied the Vert Gallant; "and I return you deep thanks for your kind assent."

"I doubt not," said Mary, "that what you have to ask will be no less than a compensation for the service you have rendered me. However, accept this jewel,"

she added, taking a ring from her finger and giving it to him, "as a testimony of the promise I have made; and with it let me add many thanks for your honourable courtesy."

The leader of the free companions received the ring with due acknowledgments; and after a few words more upon the same subject, he bowed low, as if to take his leave, and made a step towards the mouth of the cavern.

"You are not surely going to expose yourself to such a storm as this," exclaimed Alice of Imbercourt, with a degree of eagerness that made her mistress smile, and declare afterward—when, in a place of security, they could look upon the dangers of the forest as a matter of amusement—that Alice had certainly been smitten with the distinction which the Vert Gallant had shown her in carrying her in his own arms through the wood, although he knew that a princess was present.

"The storm is abating, lady," replied the freebooter; "and besides, we fear no weather. I myself go to give notice to those who can receive you as you should be received, that such a noble party require better shelter and entertainment than we poor adventurers can afford you. My men, though they must keep out of sight, will be near enough to yield you protection and assistance, on one blast of a horn. Horns are strange magical things in this wood," he added; "for though all the hunters in the world might go blowing their mots from one end of the forest to the other without seeing aught but boar or deer, I will soon show you that we can conjure up beasts of another kind."

So saying he approached the mouth of the cavern, and wound his horn with a long, shrill, peculiar blast; when, in a moment after, from the opposite part of the wood, a man, bearing the appearance of a mounted squire, trotted rapidly forth, leading a strong black charger, which he at once brought up to the mouth of the cave. A few words whispered by the Vert Gallant to the men who had accompanied him hitherto, caused them instantly to quit the place where they had taken refuge; and dispersing themselves over the side of the hill, the whole were in a few minutes lost to the sight among the trees and bushes. Their leader once more bowed low to the princess, sprang upon his horse, dashed rapidly down the rough and uneven side of the hill,

plunged through the marsh that lined the bottom of the valley, and in a moment after was seen, followed by his squire, winding in and out through the tall trees on the opposite slope, till the turn of the hill hid him from view.

It was the eyes of Alice of Imbercourt that thus followed him on his course; for the princess had seated herself on a mass of rock in the farther extreme of the cave; and her other young attendant, stupified with all the terrors and dangers she had gone through, continued sitting in silence on the ground, where the soldier who had carried her had set her down, and still kept her hands clasped over her eyes, as if every moment would show her some horrible sight.

The storm had, nevertheless, abated considerably already. The rain, it is true, continued to pour down in torrents, and an occasional flash of lightning still broke across the sky; but it was dim, and as if half-extinguished by the deluge through which it glared. The thunder, too, followed at a longer interval; and each succeeding flash was at a greater lapse of time from the one that preceded it.

Thus about an hour and a half passed away, during which the different members of the falconing party amused themselves as they best might; the groom talking with the falconers about the gallant horses they had left tied at the top of the hill, lamenting over the fright and drenching they must have been exposed to, and expressing some apprehension that the good gentlemen in green, who had hurried them away so fast from the chapel, might take advantage of their absence to carry off their good horses, the worst of which, he declared, was worth fifty golden crowns of Florence at the lowest computation. The falconers, on the other hand, who had taken care to bring away their birds with them, busied themselves actively in providing for the comfort of their hawks; and each administered to the falcon under his special charge a small ball of choice medicaments, extracted from a pouch that they carried by their sides, in order to guard the stomachs of those noble fowls from any evil as a consequence of the storm.

The old gentleman, who might be considered—what we should call in the present day—the chaperon of the party, stood by the side of the princess, and addressed to her, from time to time, with sweet unmeaning smiles

and courtly language, a variety of easy flowing sentences, very pleasant and harmonious, but signifying nothing. Alice, on her part, generally remained silent and thoughtful, though seemingly a little agitated, and perhaps, not displeased at the thought of revisiting the castle of Hannut. Sometimes she would sit at the side of the princess, and speak with her, with all the light gayety of her character; but at others she would fall into long lapses of deep and silent thought; or would stand at the mouth of the cave, and watch the diminishing rain and the storm as it passed away. Every minute it decreased in some degree; and even the poor girl who had fallen from her horse, and who was clearly the most timid of the whole party, began to look up, and to venture an occasional word to those around her.

At length, when the day was somewhat far advanced, a low whistle was heard at a considerable distance, was taken up by some one nearer, and then repeated from more than twenty places in the wood, till at last it sounded close by the cave. All then relapsed into profound silence; but, at the end of about ten minutes, a distinct trampling sound was heard: and, on looking forth from the mouth of the cave, Alice perceived, winding up from the very farthest extreme of the valley a gay cavalcade, consisting of a couple of horse litters, escorted by about twenty spearmen on horseback, bearing the colours of the Lord of Hannut.

CHAPTER XVII.

The sight of the approaching cavalcade was very acceptable to the party in the cave, who were not a little tired of their situation, as we may well conceive they would be, after having waited for nearly two hours, watching the dying away of a thunderstorm, which, after all, left no better prospect than that the hard leaden clouds which had poured forth the lightning would soften into the showery haze of an unsettled autumn night.

The troop, however, seemed to approach but slowly,—every now and then pausing and looking round the valley, as if doubtful of the exact place to which their steps should

be directed. At length Alice took an impatient step out into the shower, and was followed by one of the falconers; who soon attracted the notice of the horsemen by one of the long and peculiar whoops practised in his vocation. The moment after, a young cavalier, habited in the furs and embroideries which designated a man of noble rank in the county, dashed forward from the rest; and the next instant Hugh de Mortmar was by the side of his fair Alice.

A few words of explanation sufficed. A strange horseman, he said, whom the warder described as bearing the appearance of one of the free companions who infested the country, had given notice at the barbacan of the castle that the Princess Mary and her train were storm-staid in that valley which in the forest bore the name of "The Valley of the Marsh;" and that, of course, he had instantly set out to tender his service and assistance.

The young gentleman then, with deep respect, tendered his aid to the princess. Mary and her attendants were soon placed in the litters, or mounted on the spare horses; and, as it was too late to think of returning to Tirlemont, the whole party wound onward towards the castle of Hannut. At the earnest request of the poor groom, however, as the road by the chapel was not longer than that by which the young noble had come, it was preferred in returning to the castle, in order to relieve the horses that had been tied in the neighbourhood; and, choosing a longer but easier ascent than that which had been trod so rapidly by the Vert Gallant some hours before, the princess was soon once more on the spot from which she had been carried in the thunderstorm.

The scene that she there beheld was not a little awful. Three of the walls of the chapel, indeed, remained, but that was all; and the time-dried wood-work that had supported the tall conical roof now lay on what had once been the floor, still blackened and smouldering, though the fire which had been kindled by the lightning was now half-extinguished by the subsequent rain. The chapel itself, however, though it showed how terrible her own fate might have been, was not perhaps the most fearful object that the spot presented. The tall, majestic tree which had stood alone at a few yards in advance of the building, was rent to the very ground;

and, amid the shivered boughs and yellow leaves with which they were covered, lay motionless the beautiful horse that had been tied there, with its strong and energetic limbs—but a few hours before full of wild life and noble fire—now cold and stiff,—the wide expansive nostril, small and collapsed—the clear eye, dim and leaden, and the proud head cast powerless down the bank. There are few things show so substantially the mighty and awful power of death as to see a noble horse killed by some sudden accident. The moment before, it stands at the sublimest point of animal existence—as if the living principle were yielded to it in a greater share than any other thing,—and the next, it is shapeless carrion.

"Alas, the poor horse!" cried Mary, when her eyes fell upon the gallant beast lying stretched out beneath the tree: "alas, the poor horse!" But by a natural link of assocciation, her mind speedily reverted to herself, and the fate she had so narrowly escaped; and, closing her eyes while the litter was borne on, she spent a few moments in thankful prayer.

The other horses, which had been tied at a little distance to the east of the chapel, appeared to have broken their bridles through fear, and to have escaped. The trees under which they had been fastened remained uninjured by the storm, but no trace could be discovered of the animals themselves.

After the lapse of a few minutes spent in the search, the cavalcade moved on at a quicker pace; and Mary of Burgundy soon observed with a smile, that Hugh de Mortmar, though often at the side of the litter in which she herself had been placed, offering all those formal attentions which her rank and station required, was still more frequently in the neighbourhood of the one which followed, and which contained her fair attendant, Alice, alone. The young waiting-woman, who shared the princess's conveyance, remarked the particular attention of the young lord also, and commented on it with some acerbity: but her jealous anger was soon repressed by Mary's sweet smile; and ere long the whole cavalcade wound through the barbacan and the manifold gates of the castle of Hannut.

The retainers of the lord of the mansion, drawn up in the court-yards, received the heiress of Burgundy and Flanders with feudal reverence; and the old lord

himself waited bareheaded to hand her from the vehicle which had conveyed her thither. She was instantly conducted to the apartments which Alice of Imbercourt had inhabited during her stay; and a part of the wardrobe which she had left behind, in the hope of a speedy return, now served to replace the damp garments of the princess.

On returning from the chamber where she had made this change of dress to the little sitting-room or bower —as it was called, in the castles of the nobility of that time—the princess found that supper had been laid out for her there, rather than in the hall; but at the same time she perceived by the solitary cover which graced the table, while the Lord of Hannut and Hugh de Mortmar stood by to attend upon her, that she was to be served with all the formal state and ceremony of a sovereign princess.

"Nay, nay, my lord," she said, with a smile, "I must not suffer all this. While I am here, I must have you consider me as a wandering damoiselle, whom you have delivered from danger and distress, and with whose rank or station you are unacquainted. All therefore of noble blood must sit and partake with me of my supper, or I partake not myself."

The old Lord of Hannut, well knowing the formal ceremony maintained at the court of Burgundy, especially during the previous reign, would fain have remonstrated; but Mary cut him short, laying her hand kindly and gently on the old man's arm, and saying, in a soft and somewhat playful tone, "Must Mary of Burgundy command?—Well then, be it so: we command you, my lord, to forget from this moment that there is any one beneath your roof but a dear friend of your sweet niece, Alice. Believe me," she added, more seriously, "that I know no greater enjoyment than to cast aside the trammels of state, and the cold weight of ceremony, and let my heart play free. To me, it is like what you, my lords, must have felt in unbuckling your armour after a long day's tournament."

Although the politeness of that day was of the stately and rigid kind, which might have required the Lord of Hannut to press further the ceremonious respect he had been about to show, he had too much of the truer politeness of the heart not to yield at once to the princess's wishes thus expressed. More covers were instantly

laid upon the table; and, assuming easily the station of host, in place of that of feudal subject, he treated his fair guests during supper with easy courtesy, mingled indeed, but not loaded, with respect.

The time passed pleasantly, and many a varied topic of conversation, regarding all those matters that were interesting in that age, wiled the minutes insensibly away. The ruder subjects, indeed, connected with the state of society as it then existed,—arms, and love, and the hunting-field, the news of the day, and the gossip of the town,—were the first things spoken of, as matters on which all could converse. But speedily, as each tried the other's powers, and found that there were less ordinary subjects on which they might communicate, the conversation turned to arts, to letters, and to the human mind. Hugh de Mortmar, whose travels through many lands had made him acquainted with things but scantily known even at the luxurious court of Burgundy, told of the efforts that Italy was then beginning to make to cast off the darkness which had so long hung over her states, described many a beautiful object that he had seen in the land of ancient arts, and rose into enthusiasm as he spoke of Medici, and of all that his magnificent efforts were likely to restore to Italy.

The newly discovered art of printing, too, was mentioned and discussed, and surmises of what it might one time accomplish were ventured on that occasion which would astonish those who see them only partly realized even in the present day. But it was, perhaps, one of the weaknesses of that age to attribute great and mysterious powers to every thing that was new and unusual; and, though clear and philosophical reasoning guided the Lord of Hannut to some of his anticipations in regard to printing, a vague degree of superstition, or perhaps it might better be called mysticism, added not a little. It was an easy transition from considering what the mind could do, to consider what the mind of man even then did; and Mary, half-fearful of offending, yet with her curiosity not a little excited, led the conversation to those dark and mysterious arts, in the study of which the Lord of Hannut was supposed to pass the greater part of his time. Upon that branch of what were then called the dark sciences, which referred to the communication of mortal beings with the spiritual world, the old lord was profoundly silent; but in the accuracy

and reality of the art by which man was then supposed to read his future fate, by the bright and mysterious orbs of heaven, he expressed his most deep and sincere conviction.

"Many a long and weary night, many a deep and anxious thought, have I given," he said, "to the subject; and, after the study of nearly forty years—after searching philosophy and Scripture—after consulting the learned and the wise—I cannot doubt, madam, that the science which the Chaldee shepherds studied and acquired in the plains of the East has come down to us, though not in the degree of clear accuracy to which they had brought it. Our calculations are sometimes slightly wrong,—a day—a month—a year sometimes, too early or too late,—but, on examination, I have always found that the error was in the imperfection of my own knowledge, not in a deceitful prognostication of the stars."

The mind of woman is naturally more bent towards superstition than that of man. Mary of Burgundy had heard her father rave against astrologers as quacks and impostors, especially whenever their predictions did not accord with his own designs; but she had heard him also express, on many an occasion, a desire for their counsel; and even the abuse which he showered upon them had shown her how much importance he attached to their predictions. Her belief, indeed, in their skill was not untinged with doubt—more, indeed, than was usual in that age—but nevertheless it was still belief; and the calm and serious assurances of a man so famous for his wisdom and his skill as the Lord of Hannut raised her belief, for the time, to certainty.

"I wish," she replied with a smile, in answer to what he had last said—"I wish that I had here noted down the correct day and hour, and minute of my birth, that I might ask you, my lord, to give me some insight into my future fate."

"Were such really your wishes, lady," replied the old nobleman, "your desire might soon be gratified. Too much interest have I ever felt in the house of Burgundy, not to obtain every particular of information necessary to discover exactly, as far as human science can reach, the destinies and fate of each child of that race."

"Indeed!" cried Mary; "and can you then, calculate

for me, with any degree of accuracy, the lot that is likely to befall me in life?"—and her eyes, as she spoke, turned with a glance of inquiring interest towards Alice of Imbercourt, as if for confirmation of her belief in the old lord's skill.

"I can do more, lady," cried the Lord of Hannut: "I can show you a page where the whole is already written. While you were yet in the cradle, the interest which every one takes in those who are destined to rule nations led me to draw the scheme of your nativity, and to learn every thing concerning your part in the future, which human science could discover. At the same time, the famous Anthony of Palermo separately undertook the same task; and, after mature deliberation, though at the distance of many hundred miles, each sent to the other a transcript of the result. The difference between our calculations was so slight as scarcely to merit the name; and I can now place before your eyes the two combined. I pledge my word to you that more than eighteen years have elapsed since those calculations were made; and from the past, which you cannot doubt, you shall learn to judge of the future. Do you desire to see it?"

Mary turned somewhat pale, and paused ere she replied; but at length she answered, "I do; and thank you, sir."

"The book in which that eventful page is written," said the Lord of Hannut, "must never leave the chamber where it has been so long preserved; and I can but suffer one person to accompany you to its perusal. Choose, then, lady! who shall it be?"

"Alice," said the princess, "will you go with me?"

"Willingly—willingly," replied the lively girl, "if my uncle promise beforehand to call up no spirits to terrify us out of our senses."

"Let me beseech you not to go, madam," exclaimed the old cavalier who had accompanied them thither: "I never yet did know any one who attempted to pry into the hidden secrets of fate who did not bitterly repent it."

"Madam," said the Lord of Hannut, "follow, I entreat, your own judgment alone. I urge you not to read or to forbear; yet, as far as my memory serves me, you may read without much apprehension; for though you may have many a painful scene yet to go through—as

who in life has not?—still there will be bright days, and many, before the end."

"I will go, my lord," replied Mary. "Come, Alice, lend me your arm. My lord, I will follow you."

"Ho, without, there!—a light!—a light!" exclaimed the Lord of Hannut. "Pause yet a moment, lady. The sun is down, and the dim and narrow passages of this building are not to be trod by a stranger without more light than yon twilight sky will now afford. Bear a torch to the end of the gallery, Roger," he added, speaking to a tall old man, who appeared at his summons. "Now, madam, permit me to lead you on."

Thus speaking, he took the hand of the princess reverently in his own, and led her from the chamber, followed by Alice of Imbercourt. The next moment, Mary found herself in a long gallery, pierced by many windows turned to the westward, through which might be seen the fiery streaks left by the setting sun upon the verge of the stormy sky. Manifold doors opened opposite to these windows, and between the apertures the effigies of many a warrior frowned in steel, while the dull glare of the sunset flashed upon the polished armour, as each suit stood supported by its wooden figure, giving to all the prominent points a bloody hue—akin to the associations that the sight of those implements of war called up. At the end of this long corridor was a wide archway, at which, ere Mary had paced half the length of the gallery, a figure took its place, bearing a lighted torch; and though the whole arrangement of the building was, in that age, more common, and consequently appeared less gloomy, than it would seem at present; still there was an aspect of solemn grandeur about it, that raised, and yet saddened, the feelings of Mary of Burgundy, as she advanced in the firm belief that she was about to see the scheme of her future life laid open before her eyes.

Passing through the archway, with the torch-bearer preceding them, the old lord and his two fair companions wound round the greater part of the building, in order to reach the apartment in which he pursued his studies, without passing through the common hall; and as they swept along the dark and narrow passages, with the torch-light flashing on the rude and mouldered stone, the sense of awe and expectation increased in the bosom of the princess almost to the height of pain. Alice, too

felt it, and was profoundly silent; and when at length they entered the chamber in which the lonely hours of a long life had been spent in solitary and mysterious study, she gazed around her with a glance of curiosity and apprehension, which clearly showed that she herself had never set her foot within its walls before. The silver lamp hung lighted from the roof; and the attendant with his torch drew back to let them pass, carefully avoiding, however, to set his foot across the threshold

Mary's heart beat quick; and she now began to ask herself whether she had any right to unveil that awful future over which the Almighty had cast so profound a shadow. What was she about to do! To learn her fate, without the possibility of changing it—to acquire the knowledge of each event that was to happen, without the power of avoiding or ruling it as it arose—to mark every danger while yet it lay in the womb of the future—to foreknow every pang while yet it was far distant—to sip the cup of agony and fear, drop by drop, long before fate compelled her to the draught—and to make each day miserable with the certainty of the morrow's sorrow.

While such thoughts passed through her mind, the old noble took down one of the large volumes from the cabinet, and unfastening the golden clasps with which it was bound, he laid it on the desk beneath the lamp. "Madam," he said, "you wished to know the fate of your future years; it is now before you. Event by event I have marked the current of the past, and I have found no error yet in what is there written. Read, then, and with full confidence; for as sure as that we all live, and that we all must die, every turn of your coming existence is there written down."

Mary took a step forward towards the book—laid her fair hand upon the yellow leaves—then paused, and gazed upwards for a moment. "No!" she exclaimed at length—"no! it is wiser—it is better as it is! Most merciful was the decree of the Most High, that veiled the future in uncertainty. Forgive me, God, that I have sought to pry beyond the limits that thou thyself hast set! No, no! I will not read!" So saying, she drew hastily back, as if afraid of her own determination—cast open the door, and quitted the apartment.

The Lord of Hannut followed in some surprise. "Madam," he said, as he offered his hand to guide the

princess through the passages which the want of the torch now rendered totally dark, "I will not say you have done wrong; but you have, I own, surprised me."

"My lord," replied the princess, "I feel that I have done right, and have not suffered curiosity to triumph over reason; at least," she added, with a smile, "you can say that there is one woman in the world, who, when the book of destiny was laid open before her, refused to read!"

"It is, indeed, a wonder which may well be noted down," replied the old nobleman; "but, I believe, we have left another behind who may not have the same prudence—Alice." He added aloud,—"Alice! beware! Close the door, fair niece," he added, as the young lady followed; and having seen that it was fastened, he led the way back to the apartments which the princess was to occupy for the night.

The party they now rejoined were, as may be naturally supposed, full of curiosity, which, however much restrained by respect, was sufficiently apparent; and Mary, whose spirits had risen since her determination had been formed, told them at once, with gay good-humour, that she had been afraid to read; "And therefore," she said, "I can tell you nothing of the future—for, thank God! I know nothing."

"I am happy then, madam," said Hugh de Mortmar, "that I can tell you something of the present which may make up for the disappointment; and what I can tell you is good. A messenger has arrived during your brief absence, bringing news from Lorraine. My lord, your father, is, as you doubtless know, in the field; and, notwithstanding the checks of Granson and Morat, has an army in better condition than ever. Of all this you are aware: but now you will be glad to hear, that Regnier of Lorrain, and all his Switzers, have fled before the duke, across the Moselle; that Dieulewart, Pont à Mouchon, and Pont, have surrendered to Burgundy; and that the general of the enemy has left his army and retired to Germany."

Such tidings in regard to the present banished the thoughts of the future, which the preceding events had called up; and the messenger, being summoned to the presence of the princess, repeated the joyful news he had brought, in a more circumstantial manner; and added the still more important information, in Mary's

eyes, that her father was in good health, and had totally shaken off the lethargy of grief into which the defeat at Morat had thrown him for many weeks.

Thus passed the evening of the princess's stay in the castle of Hannut; and early the next morning, escorted by Hugh de Mortmar and a large body of armed retainers, as well as a party of her own attendants, who had arrived from Tirlemont, she passed through the forest, and proceeded on the visitation which she was making to various cities in the county of Flanders.

In each and all she was received with loud and joyful acclamations; for as both Philip of Comines and good John Molinet observed of their countrymen, the Flemings, they always adored the heirs of the county till they were invested with the real authority; but from the moment they succeeded to the sovereignty, they became objects of as much detestation and abuse as they before were of love and applause. Thus, as she progressed through the land, Mary fondly fancied that the Flemings had been a people greatly traduced, and believed that their hearts and best wishes would surely follow a mild and just government. That such, under all circumstances and in every time, should be the character of her own sway, she firmly resolved; and she returned to Ghent, convinced that peace, good-will, and union of purpose would ever reign between her and the honest commons of Flanders.

CHAPTER XVIII.

We must make our narrative of the events which took place in Ghent precede the arrival of the princess in that city by a few days, as her return did not take place till the evening of the 10th of January, 1477; and it may be necessary to mark particularly some circumstances which occurred on the 8th of that month; premising, however, that the local government had been left in the hands of the Lord of Imbercourt during her absence.

The scene to which we wish to introduce the reader was a small dark chamber in one of the largest mercan-

tile houses in Ghent, but far removed from the warehouse or the shop, and fitted up with a degree of luxury and elegance only known in Europe, at that time, to the great Flemish or Venetian merchants. The walls were hung with rich tapestry; carpets of the same fabric covered the floor. Silver lamps and small round mirrors—then one of the most costly articles of furniture—hung around; and, in short, the whole interior of the room presented an aspect of wealth and comfort which might well rival the splendour of modern days.

At the time I speak of, however, various circumstances combined to show that the apartment was the abode of sorrow. Only one of the lamps was lighted. The cloak and bonnet of a citizen of the time were cast recklessly on the ground, near the door. A small dagger lay upon the table; and, in a seat before it, with his eyes buried in his hands, and his body shaken with convulsive sobs, sat the little druggist Ganay, displaying that sort of dejected disarray of dress, and careless fall of the limbs, which denotes so strongly that despair has mastered the citadel of hope in the human heart.

From time to time, the sobs and groans which struggled from his bosom gave way to momentary exclamations—sometimes loud and fierce, sometimes muttered and low. "He was my son," he would exclaim—"ay, notwithstanding all, he was my son! He had robbed me, it is true—taken my gold—resisted my authority—scoffed at my rebuke—but still my blood poured through his veins;—and to die such a death—by the common hangman!—like a dog!—to hang over the gate of the city, for the ravens to eat him, like the carrion of a horse!" and once more, he gave way to tears and groans. Then again he would exclaim,—"The fiends! the incarnate fiends!—to slaughter my poor boy like a wolf—to refuse prayers, entreaties, gold!—can they be fathers!—out upon them, cold-hearted tigers!—he has done no more than many a man has done. What though the woman was wronged!—what though her brother was slain in the affray!—Do not these proud nobles do worse every day!—Besides, she should have had gold, oceans of gold; but now I will have revenge—deep, bitter, insatiable revenge!" and he shook his thin bony hand in the air, while the fire of hell itself seemed gleaming from the bottom of his small dark eyes

At that moment there was a noise heard without;

and the voices of two persons in some degree of contention, as if the one strove to prevent the other from entering, sounded along the passage.

"Out of my way!" cried the one, in a harsh, sharp, grating tone; "I tell you, boy, I must enter; I have business with your master. I enter everywhere, at all times and seasons."

"But don't you know, sir, what has happened?" cried the other voice; "my master is in great affliction, and bade us deny sight of him to every one."

"I know all about it, much better than you do, lad," replied the first. "Out of my way, I say, or I will knock your head against the wall."

The little druggist had started up at the first sounds; and, after gazing upon the door for a moment, with the fierce intensity of the tiger watching his victim before the spring, he seemed to recognise the voice of the speaker who sought to force his way in; and, snatching the dagger hastily from the table, he placed it in his bosom, wiped away the marks of tears from his eyes, and then cast himself back again in his seat.

Almost at the same moment the door opened, and Maillotin du Bac, the prévôt of the Duke of Burgundy, appeared, together with a lad, who seemed to be a serving boy of the druggist's. The prévôt was habited in a different manner, on the present occasion, from that in which we have before depicted him. He was no longer either clad in arms, as he had appeared at the castle of Hannut, or wrapped in bandages, as he had shown himself before the council. His dress was now a rich and costly suit of fine cloth, splendidly embroidered, together with a bonnet of the same colour, in which, as was then very customary among the nobles, he wore the brush of a fox, slightly drooping on one side, as it may sometimes be seen in the cap of the successful hunter of the present day. Over his more gaudy apparel, however, he had cast a long black cloak, bordered with sable, which he probably used, in general, on occasions of mourning.

"This person will have entrance," said the youth who accompanied him, addressing the little druggist, "notwithstanding all I can do to prevent him."

"Hinder him not," replied Ganay; "but shut the door and get thee gone."

The boy readily obeyed the order he received; and

Maillotin du Bac, advancing into the room, saluted the druggist with some degree of formal courtesy, not unmixed with that solemnity of aspect wherewith men do reverence to griefs they personally feel but little.

"Health and better cheer to you, Master Ganay!" he said, taking a seat close by the druggist—"health and better cheer to you! This is a sad business indeed, and I wish to speak over it with you."

The druggist eyed him for a moment or two in bitter silence, while his heavy eyebrows were drawn together till they met, and almost concealed the small piercing eyes beneath them.

"You are kind, Sir Prévôt," he said, in a sneering tone; "you are mighty kind; but let me tell you, that were it not that I hear there has been something strange—I know not whether to say friendly—in the conduct that you have pursued through all that is gone, I would soon show you how a man deserves to be treated, who forces himself upon a father on the day of his son's death."

"Why, now, Master Ganay, I can bear with you a great deal," replied the prévôt; "and therefore, say what you will, I shall not be offended: but you very well know, that I would not myself, nor would I suffer any of my men, to have any thing to do with this bad business, either in regard to the arrest or the execution."

"Murder! call it murder!" cried the druggist, grasping the arm of his chair, with a convulsive motion of his hand.

"Well, murder be it," replied the prévôt, "though they say they did it all by law. But, however, I did not choose to have any thing to do with it; not alone from considering the right or wrong of the matter, but because I had a regard for yourself, and that there are two or three little feelings in common between us."

"Ay, indeed!" cried the druggist; "and what may they be?"

Maillotin du Bac laid his large, strong, bony hand upon the arm of the druggist, and fixing his keen hawk-like eyes upon his face, replied,—"First and foremost—hatred to Imbercourt."

"Ha!" cried the druggist, almost starting from his seat; "how knew you that I hated him?—at least, before this last dark deed?"

"Because," replied Maillotin du Bac, "some ten years

ago, when the people of Ghent were pressing boldly round the duke, and shouting for their privileges, I saw this Imbercourt give a contemptuous buffet to a man who had caught him by the robe. Do you remember such a thing? The man was a rich druggist of Ghent; and in his first fury he got a knife half-way out of his bosom—not unlike that which lies in your own, Master Ganay—but the moment after he put it up again, as he saw the duke's horsemen riding down; and, with a smooth face and pleasant smile, said to the man who had struck him,—'We shall meet again, fair sir.'"

"Ay, and we have met again—but how?—but how?" cried the druggist, grasping the arm of the prévôt tight as he spoke; "how have we met again? Not as it should have been—for vengeance on the insolent oppressor; no! but to go upon my knees before him—to humble myself to the very dust—to drop my tears at his feet—to beseech him to spare my child's life."

"And he spurned you away from him, of course," replied Maillotin du Bac, eagerly.

"No, no," answered the druggist; "no, no, he did not spurn me,—but he did worse—he pretended to pity me. He declared that what I asked was not in his power—that he had not pronounced the sentence—that it was the eschevins of the city—and that he had no right nor authority to reverse the judgment. Oh! that I should have been the cursed idiot to have humbled myself before him—to be pitied, to be commiserated by him whose buffet was still burning on my cheek—to be called poor man! unhappy father!—to be prayed to take some wine, as if I had not the wherewithal to buy it for myself. Out upon them all!—eternal curses light upon their heads, and sink them all to hell!"—and as he spoke, the unhappy man gave way to one of those fearful fits of wrath which had divided his moments, during the whole of that day, with grief as bitter and unavailing.

Maillotin du Bac let the first gust of passion have its way, with that sort of calm indifferent management of the other's grief which showed how familiar his ruthless office had rendered him with every expression of human misery and despair. "Ay," he said, after the tempest had in some degree passed, "it was just like him; a cold calculating person enough he is, and was, and always will be! Much should I like to hear, though, how

it happened that he had no power to grant pardon. Did not the princess give him full power when she went?"

"He said, not! he said, not!" cried the druggist, eagerly; "and if he lied, with a father's tears dewing his feet—a father's agony before his eyes—he has purchased a place for himself as deep as Judas in the fiery abyss,—if there be such a place, at least, as monks would have us believe; would it were true for his sake."

"But why did you not pray him," demanded the prévôt, "to stay the execution till the return of the princess herself? she would have granted you an easy pardon, and your boy's life might have been saved."

"I did, I did," replied the unhappy father; "I did pray—I did beseech—for a day—for an hour; but he would not listen to me. He said that the circumstances of the case would not justify such an action; that the proofs were clear and undoubted; that he—he, my poor luckless boy—had committed an offence heinous in the eyes of God and man; that he had outraged a defenceless woman, and slain a fellow-creature to escape from the punishment of the crime he had committed! Oh! may the time come that he himself may plead for mercy to ears as deaf and inexorable! Mark me, Sir Prévôt, mark me! men say lightly that they would give a right hand for some trifling nothing that they covet in this world—some rare jewel, or some painted hood, or some prancing horse; but I would lay down both these old hands, and bid the hangman strike them off—ay, with a smile—for but one hour of sweet revenge."

"If such be the case," replied Maillotin du Bac, in his usual commonplace tone—

"If such be the case!" exclaimed the other, starting up with a new and violent burst of passion: "if such be the case! I tell thee it is, man! Why came you here? What do you want with me? Beware how you urge a desperate man! What seek you? What offer you? Do you come to give me revenge? If me no ifs, Sir Prévôt. Come you to give revenge?"

"I do!" replied the prévôt, who had been waiting till the other had run out his hasty exclamations; "I do, Master Ganay, if you can recover your cool tranquillity, and argue some difficult points with me, with the calm policy with which, I have heard, you can bend some of your young and inexperienced comrades to your purpose. But recollect yourself—be determined, collected,

and politic, and you shall have revenge—As I am a living man!" he added, seeing the druggist's eyes fix upon him with a look of stern inquiry.

"Then I am calm!" answered the old man; "as calm as the dead. I seek but that one thing—revenge! Thou sayest true, Sir Prévôt; I have been moved—far too much moved.—I, who am wont to stir the mind of others, while I keep my own as tranquil as a still lake, I should not have yielded to such mad despair, but should only have thought how I might repay the mighty debts I owe to some below the moon. Pardon me, and forget what you have seen—but you have never lost a child; you have never seen your only one given to the butchers. But I am calm, as I said, quite calm; and I will be calmer still. Ho, boy! without there!" and rising from the table, he threw open the door, and rang a small silver hand-bell which stood beside him; and in answer to the tones of which, the boy who had before presented himself reappeared.

"Bring me," said the druggist, "that small box of the precious juice of the Thebaid, which the Venetian merchants sent me as pure and unadulterated. Let us be silent till it comes," he added, speaking to the prévôt; "it will soon calm all but the settled purpose. I marvel that I thought not of its virtues before."

The boy soon returned, bringing a small box of sanders wood, in which—wrapped in innumerable covers, to preserve its virtues—was a quantity of pure opium, from the mass of which the druggist pinched off a small portion, and swallowed it, much to the surprise of Maillotin du Bac, who held all drugs in sovereign abhorrence. However violent might be his passions, Ganay, by the influence of a powerful mind, had acquired such complete command over them, on all ordinary occurrences, that seldom, if ever, had they overpowered his control in the course of life. On the present occasion, indeed, despair and mental agony had conquered all for a time: but, even before he had swallowed the opium, he had recovered his power; and speedily as that great narcotic began to exercise its soothing influence upon the irritated fibres of his corporeal frame, the mind acquired still greater ascendency, and he felt no little shame and contempt for himself, on account of the weak burst of phrensied violence to which he had given way in the presence of the prévôt.

He was too politic, however, when he had recovered, to show that he did contemn the feelings to which he had given way; and he at once prepared to play with Maillotin du Bac the same shrewd and artificial part which he had laid down as the general rule of his behaviour towards mankind.

The two were fairly matched; for the prévôt was one of those men in whom a sort of natural instinct, as well as the continual habit of observation, leads to the clear perception of other men's motives, especially where they strive to conceal themselves among the dark and tortuous paths of policy. He was, certainly, sometimes wrong in his calculations, but was not often so; and, in the present instance, by placing himself exactly in the situation of the druggist, and conceiving what would have been his own feelings under such circumstances, with a little allowance for the difference of character, he arrived at a very correct conclusion in regard to the designs and the wishes of his companion, as well as to the obstacles which might impede them from acting together.

One great difficulty, indeed, would have lain in his way on almost any other occasion; for so accustomed was he both to see others attempt to deceive him, and to deceive others himself in return, that he could scarcely deal straight-forwardly with any one. As he was now perfectly sincere, however, in his desire of aiding the druggist's revenge, or rather of accomplishing his own through that of Ganay, he could afford to be candid on the present occasion. All that obstructed their cordial co-operation arose in those doubts and fears of each other which all villains, however bold, must naturally feel on leaguing themselves together for an evil purpose; and such jealousies were undoubtedly felt strongly by the prévôt and his companion.

Nevertheless, these difficulties were to be got over. The doubts and suspicions were soon very frankly avowed: for as each—though with certain modifications—considered cunning or shrewdness as the height of human wisdom, and, consequently, of human virtue, vanity itself naturally taught them to display rather than to conceal the prudent circumspection, with which they guarded against any danger from each other.

We cannot here detail the whole conversation that ensued; but, in the first instance, the druggist made

himself master of all the circumstances which acted as incentives to revenge in the mind of Maillotin du Bac, against the Lord of Imbercourt before he committed himself further. By many a keen question, he induced him to unveil, step by step, the manner in which, through many years, that nobleman had thwarted his designs, and incurred his displeasure; how he had cut him off from reward and honour where he had striven for it by dishonourable means; how he had defended the innocent against his persecution; how he had sternly overturned many of his best-laid schemes, and exposed some of his most subtle contrivances, from a period of many years before up to the day in which his testimony had freed Albert Maurice from the effects of the prévôt's vindictive hatred. Had there been one defect in the chain,—had not the motive for vengeance been clear and evident,—the suspicions of the druggist might have remained unshaken, and he might have conceived that Maillotin du Bac had visited him as a spy, with the design of betraying the schemes of vengeance which his incautious indignation might breathe, to the ears of those who had refused mercy to his child. But the prévôt, appreciating and revering his suspicions, recapitulated every event with cool, bitter exactness, and dwelt upon the various circumstances with a precision that showed how deeply they were impressed upon his memory. He added, too, a slight glimpse of interested motives, by showing how Imbercourt had stood in the way of his advancement, and how he might be profited in his own office, if that nobleman were removed, by any means, from the councils of Burgundy.

The impression thus left upon the mind of the burgher —and it was a correct one—was, that there was a long store of treasured hatred in the mind of the prévôt towards this statesman Imbercourt, aggravated by thwarted ambition and avarice; and that he had reached that point at which he was ready to run considerable risks for the gratification of his vengeance and the promotion of his interest. As to any moral sentiment standing in the way, it was an objection which neither the prevôt nor the druggist ever dreamed of. Those were ties from which each felt that the other was free, and therefore they were never taken into consideration.

After a long conversation had brought them to this

mutual state of good understanding; and after the druggist had pretty plainly pointed out that, before proceeding with any of the deeper and more intricate schemes, which might place the life of each in the power of the other, he should expect that the prévôt would join with him in some act which, though less dangerous, would give him a hold upon that officer, which at present he did not possess, he went on with the calmness of intense but subdued feelings.

"By the sentence of the eschevins," he said, in a low, quiet tone, which was, perhaps, more impressive than even his former bursts of passion; "by the sentence of the eschevins, Sir Prévôt, the body—you understand me—the body is to hang in chains over the Ypres gate, till such time as it is consumed by the wind and the rain, and the foul birds of prey; will it not be sweet for a father's eyes to behold such a sight every time that he rides forth from his own house!"

"Why, truly no, Master Ganay," replied Maillotin du Bac: "good faith, you must take some other road."

"Ay; but would it not be a matter of triumph, rather than shame," replied the druggist, "if I could ride through that gate, and find the body gone! In a word, would it not be proud to show these paltry tyrants that even now they cannot work *all* their will!—What! do you not understand me yet! I would have my son's head laid in the calm ground, man: I would have the body of the thing I loved removed from the place of horror and of shame.—What say you!—can it be done!"

"I understand you now," replied the prévôt: "let me but think a moment, Master Ganay,—let me but think a moment. It can be done—ay, it can be done: but I should think it mattered little to one of your firm mind. The body will rot as soon in the holiest ground that ever priest or bishop blessed, as in the wide unholy air."

"Do I not know that!" demanded Ganay, with a curling lip. "Think you that I ever dream of angels or devils, or all the absurd fancies that monks and priestly quacks have built up, on the wild vision of a hereafter! —No, no! but I would fain disappoint the tyrants, and teach them that they cannot do all. I would fain, too, remove the memento of my house's shame from before the eyes of my fellow-citizens.—Can it be done, I say!"

"It can—it can!" replied Maillotin du Buc: "and, to please you, it shall be done. Hie you away straight to the churchyard of the Minnims, with some one you can trust bearing pickaxe and shovel. Use my name, and the porter will soon let you in. Wait there till I come, and busy the man you take with you in digging a trench. Be quick; for it will take long. I go upon *my* errand; and will be there in about two hours. After this, Master Ganay, I think we may trust each other. So we will meet again to-morrow night, at this hour; and, if I mistake not, we will soon find means to crush the viper that has stung us both."

The druggist replied not a word, but wrung the hand that the prévôt had given him hard in his own, and suffered him to depart.

It were needless to trace further the proceedings of that night, or to give any more detailed explanations in regard to the events just mentioned, than to say, that early the following morning a party of children and women assembled before the Ypres gate, to gaze,—with that fondness for strange and fearful sights which often characterizes that age and that sex,—upon the body of young Karl Ganay, the rich druggist's son, who, after a short course of wild profligacy and vice, had been hanged for murder the day before. However much they might expect to have their wonder excited, it was so in a greater degree, though in a different manner from that which they anticipated. There, on the projecting beam from which the unhappy young man had been suspended, hung, indeed, the rope which had terminated his existence, and the chains which marked the additional turpitude of his offence, but the body itself was no longer there, and the tidings of what had occurred soon spread through the city.

Strict search was immediately instituted. The eschevins, and other officers appointed by the Duke of Burgundy, were furious at their authority being set at naught, and both held out threats and offered rewards for the discovery of the body; but it was all in vain: and while some of the more malevolent—remembering the course of young Ganay's life, and into the hands of what being it had appeared likely to cast him in the end—accounted for the disappearance of his body, by supposing that the great enemy of mankind had carried it off as his due, others, more charitable, but not less super-

stitious, chose to believe that the father, by some drugs only known to himself, had found means to resuscitate his son, and had sent him away to some distant land, where his crimes and their punishment were equally unknown.

This version of the affair, indeed, obtained by far the most numerous body of supporters; and the tale, swollen and disfigured by tradition, is still to be heard at the firesides of the citizens of Ghent.

CHAPTER XIX.

Other matters of more general interest occurred soon after the events we have narrated in the last chapter, and imperatively called the attention of the citizens of Ghent from the unhappy druggist and his son. Strange rumours of a battle fought and lost beneath the walls of Nancy circulated in the good town during the evening of the ninth of January. No one, however, could trace them to their source. No messenger had arrived in the city from the army of the Duke of Burgundy; and the wise and prudent among the citizens, after a few inquiries concerning the authority on which these reports rested, rejected them as false and malicious.

They were borne, however, in the evening, by Mail lotin du Bac, to the ears of the druggist Ganay: and the chance of such an event was eagerly canvassed between them, as well as the course of action to be pursued in case the tidings should prove true; which, as they calculated all the probabilities, and suffered their wishes in some degree to lead their judgments, they gradually persuaded themselves was even more than likely.

Long and anxious were their deliberations; and it was verging fast towards the hour of three in the morning when the prévôt left the dwelling of the rich merchant. It was a clear frosty night, with the bright small stars twinkling in thousands through a sky from which every drop of vapour and moisture seemed frozen away by the intense cold. The world was all asleep; and the sound of a footfall in the vacant streets was enough to make

even the journeyer himself start at the noise his step produced, so still and silent was the whole scene. The sinking moon, though she still silvered over with her light the frost-work on the high roofs of the various buildings, and poured a flood of mellow splendour down the long streets that led to the westward, cast the broad shadows of the principal buildings completely over all the other parts of the town, leaving no light but that which was diffused through the whole air by the general lightness of the sky, and the glistening whiteness of the ice upon the canals. There is always something sublime and touching in the aspect of a large city sleeping calmly in the moonlight of a clear quiet night, with all its congregated thousands reposing beneath the good providence of God. But the mind of Maillotin du Bac had reached that point of obduracy at which the sweetest or the most solemn, the most refreshing or the most awful of the pages in Nature's great monitory book are equally unheeded. Wrapping his cloak round him, to guard against the cold, he walked on close to the houses, and turned into the first small narrow street that he found, in order that no watchful eye, if such existed, might trace him from the house of the druggist. Thence, again deviating into one of those lateral streets that lead along by the side of the principal ones, he continued his course over the stones, rendered black and slippery by the intense frost.

All was still. Not a sound fell upon the ear, but every now and then the distant crowing of a cock heard through the clear air from the country beyond the walls. After a little, however, as the prévôt walked on, he caught the tramp of a horse's feet sounding afar off, and, in a few minutes, the challenge of the sentries at the Alost gate, the clang of the portcullis, the fall of the drawbridge, a brief-murmured conversation at the gate, and then again the sound of the horse's feet advancing at a slow pace—which the state of the pavement rendered necessary—down the principal street. All this he heard clearly and distinctly; for the sound must have been small indeed which, in the calm still winter air of the night, did not reach his practised ear.

He was now too far from the house of the druggist for his appearance in the streets, even at that late hour, to lead to any suspicion of their connexion, especially as

his official duties were always a fair excuse for conduct that in other men might have led to doubt and question. At the same time, the very habits of his life gave him a propensity to investigate every occurrence, however slight, so that the sound of some one entering the city, at such an hour of the night instantly attracted his attention, and his curiosity at once led him to take a short cut into the street down which the horseman was riding. It was one of those which, running nearly east and west, was still illumined by the pale light of the moon; and the eye of Maillotin du Bac, which never forgot the form that it had once rested upon, instantly perceived and recognised an armed cavalier riding towards him, whom he had known as a boon companion in the army of the Duke of Burgundy.

His resolution was instantly taken to accost him; and, stepping out of the shadow as the cavalier approached, he exclaimed, "Why, how now! what news, Paul Verdun! How long have you left the camp?"

"Who the devil art thou?" was the first reply of the cavalier, who appeared to have drunk fully more wine than was beneficial to his faculties of perception—"who the devil art thou?—What! Master Prévôt?—give you good day—give you good day—night, that is to say: or day it may be, too; for, by my faith, it is after cock-crow. What! going your rounds?—Ever watchful, Master Prévôt, hey?—What news of the good city?"

"Nothing stirring—nothing stirring," replied Maillotin du Bac: "no news at all, except that the eschevins hanged a man yesterday without my help. But what news of the camp, I say; and how came you from it?"

"Ay, there is the mischief," replied the soldier.

"What! no new defeat?" interrupted Maillotin du Bac, his wish, very likely, being father to the thought.

"Defeat! No, no—no defeat, man!" replied the soldier: "never were we better. A glorious army—posted strongly—the town almost reduced by famine, and nothing but a handful of raw Switzers come to relieve it. There will be a battle before many days are over; and Duke Charles will cut up the churls like mince-meat. But the mischief is, that I should be sent away before it is fought."

"So there has been no battle after all?" replied the

prévôt. "Well, God send it a good issue when it does come. Good night, good friend: I must on upon my way."

"Good night!—good night!" replied the soldier: "faith, I must on my way too; for I have letters from the duke, and from the Count de Chimay, for my good Lord of Imbercourt; and, somehow, I met with three good companions at Alost, who wasted my time over their cursed pottle-pots. Good night!—good night!" and so saying, he rode on.

"Ha!" muttered the prévôt, as he walked onward towards his own dwelling: "so, that scheme is all vain, and we must try the other, though it will be both difficult and dangerous to get any one to give him the dose. I had rather that it had been something public, too, if it had but been to wring his pride." Thus muttering as he went, the prévôt now trod his way homeward. The soldier and his war-horse were admitted into the court of the Lord of Imbercourt's hotel. The streets of Ghent resumed their solitude and silence; and the night between the ninth and tenth of January ended in peace.

No small activity was observable, however, the next morning in the precincts of the court. By seven o'clock the Lord of Imbercourt was on horseback, and proceeding towards the palace, at which Margaret Duchess of Burgundy, and sister to Edward King of England, had arrived the day before. The Princess Mary, too, was expected from the side of Bruges. But, nevertheless, two messengers were sent off, at different times, in that direction; and it was supposed that they bore her the intelligence of an approaching battle, and recommended her immediate return to the city.

The news which had been brought by Paul Verdun, and the certainty that at the time of his departure from the Burgundian camp no battle had been fought, spread rapidly through the city, and was received by every different individual with different feelings, as he was well or ill affected to the reigning family. The certainty, however, that an immediate struggle was about to take place between Charles the Bold and his determined and hitherto successful adversaries, the Swiss, of course kept the minds of the people of the city in a state of agitation and excitement,—a state the most detrimental, morally and physically, that it is possible to conceive for any town or any people. Business was neglected,

if not suspended; political gossipings supplied the room of activity and industry; anxiety, suspicion, and irritation took the place of calm labour and tranquil enjoyment; the slightest piece of news, whether false or true, was sought and received as a boon; the wildest tale found some to believe it; and a small lie, by the industrious augmentation of many, soon swelled into a mountain of falsehood.

Towards evening the Princess Mary arrived at the palace; and while the good people of Ghent proceeded to distort among themselves the news of her return in every different way that suited their fancies—some saying that she had come back with only a single squire, some that she had brought with her a force of a thousand men-at-arms—that fair girl herself, after dismounting in the court-yard, together with exactly the same train that had accompanied her during the whole course of her progress, ran lightly up the wide flight of steps which conducted to the apartments of her amiable stepdame, and in a moment after was in the arms of Margaret of York.

"Bless thee, my sweet child! bless thee!" said the fair Englishwoman, pressing her husband's daughter to her bosom: "thou art come to comfort me; for I am very sad, and my heart is full of forebodings."

"Nay, nay, madam, never fear," replied the princess; "you are sad and anxious because you know my lord and father is likely to risk a battle,—and I, of course, am anxious too; but still we must not despond. Remember, madam, how often he has fought and conquered."

"It is not for the battle that I fear," replied Margaret of York: "my early days, and my early recollections have been, and are, of nothing but stricken fields, and battles lost and won; and the tidings of approaching strife would give me no apprehensions, did not those who are on the spot give breath to doubts and suspicions which have sadly shaken my hopes, dear Mary. In a word, with the duke's letters, received last night, came a despatch to the good Lord of Imbercourt from the Count de Chimay. He speaks vaguely and doubtingly; but he evidently apprehends treasons, and as evidently points to Campo Basso as the traitor—your father's most trusted and favourite servant."

"I would fain see the letters," replied the princess:

"may I beseech you, madam, to let the Lord of Imbercourt be sent for?"

The desire of the princess was immediately obeyed; and in a short time Imbercourt returned to the palace. His words were few, and tended merely to express his congratulations on the princess's safe return, without touching upon the fears which had been more openly spoken by the Duchess of Burgundy. There was, however, that degree of settled gloom upon his countenance, and a restless anxiety in his eye, which showed that his apprehensions were perhaps greater even than her own. He immediately laid before the Princess Mary the letters which he had received the night before, and which, as far as positive fact went, merely stated that the Burgundian army, in great force, lay in a strong position beneath the walls of Nancy; that a small army of Swiss and Germans were encamped opposite to them, and that a battle was likely soon to take place. The duke's letter was short and general: that of the Count de Chimay was more particular; and Mary read over both with deep and eager attention.

"There is much to fear," she said, as she laid them down, "in both these despatches. May God defend us, and avert the dangers that threaten!"

"That there is much to fear in the letter of Monsieur de Chimay, I acknowledge, madam," replied the Lord of Imbercourt; "but I see nothing in that of our noble sovereign the duke which should give us any apprehension."

Mary raised her eyes with a timid glance towards the face of Margaret of York, as if fearful of giving her pain, or of increasing her alarm. But the duchess instantly perceived the cause of her hesitation, and exclaimed, "Speak, speak, dear Mary! let us not have a thought concealed from each other."

"Well then," replied Mary, the tears starting in her eyes, "I must say I see more, far more cause for apprehension in *this* letter than in *this*," and she laid her hand first upon the letter of her father, and then upon that of the Count de Chimay. "The one," she proceeded, "speaks vaguely of traitors to be feared in my father's camp; the other shows me much cause to fear for my father himself. O, my lord," she added, laying her left hand upon the arm of Imbercourt, while with her right she pointed to a number of blots and erasures, sentences

begun and not finished, or phrases entirely altered in the despatch from her father: "O, my lord! do you not see a great alteration here? The time was when the brief, clear sentences of Charles of Burgundy, unstudied and rough though they might sometimes be, proceeded at once to the point, without change or hesitation, and expressed with force and precision the exact meaning, which was too clear in his mind ever to be doubtful in his words: but look at that letter, my lord. Did you ever see any thing like that from the hand of the duke before?"

Imbercourt was silent, and gazed upon the paper with a stern and mournful glance.

"My lord, my lord!" continued Mary, "my father is ill; and, with Heaven's blessing, I will set out to-morrow to see him and console him."

"Nay, lady," replied Imbercourt, "you must not forget that you are left here by your father as his representative in Flanders; and indeed you must not quit your post. Before you could arrive, too, a battle will have been fought. I will yet trust that the noble duke will win it gloriously: and you know him too well to doubt," he added with a faint smile, "that a battle won will do more to console him than the sweetest voice that ever whispered comfort in the ear of man."

"I do indeed—I do indeed!" replied Mary; but no smile accompanied her words; for that truth had been often felt too bitterly during the course of her past life. —"I do indeed; but yet the only thing that can detain me here while my father, ill at ease, and shaken both in body and mind, lies in his weary leaguer before Nancy, is the doubt which is the superior duty—to join him there or to remain in the situation in which he has placed me."

"Nay, nay, Mary," said Margaret of York; "your duty binds you to stay here, and mine calls me hence. You can trust my love for both your father and yourself; and as soon as may be I will join him, though, haply, my coming unbidden may call on me some harsh words, as when last I saw him at Dijon."

"Bear with him, dear lady! oh, bear with him!" replied Mary. "It is but the haste of an impatient spirit chafed by unwonted reverses. He knows the worth of your love too well to chide with any bitterness. But hark!" she proceeded—"what noise is that in the

court! For God's sake, my Lord of Imbercourt, look out and see! for since I took upon me the sad task of holding the reins, which require a far stronger hand than mine, I have met with so many sorrows and misfortunes, that every sound alarms me.—Hark! there are many people speaking."

In obedience to her command, Imbercourt approached the casement which opened above the lesser court of the palace, and throwing back a part of the lattice, he looked out upon what was passing below. The first object that his eyes fell upon was the form of the old Lord of Neufchatel, in the act of dismounting from his horse by the aid of two stout attendants, whose dusty armour and jaded horses evinced that they, like their master, had travelled far and fast. The old nobleman himself, however, displayed strong traces of battle as well as wayfaring. His helmet was off, and its place supplied by a small furred cap, from underneath which a mingled mass of bandages and long gray hair, dabbled with dust and blood, made its appearance; while his left arm, supported in a torn and soiled scarf, showed that the fight had been severe ere he left it.

Imbercourt at once guessed the event which he had come to communicate; well knowing that an aged and wounded cavalier would not have been chosen as the messenger of victory: and while, with slow and painful efforts, the old lord dismounted, the counsellor withdrew from the window, doubting whether he should meet him on the stairs, and delay the tidings that he bore till Mary was more prepared to receive them, or whether he should suffer him to see the princess, and let the shock pass over at once. His course however, was determined by Mary herself, who marked the conflict in his mind by the changing expression of his countenance.

"What is it, my lord?" she exclaimed; "speak boldly!—Are they again in revolt?"

"Who, madam?—the men of Ghent?" demanded Imbercourt.—"Oh! no, no! nothing of the kind. It is apparently a wounded officer, bearing news from the army; and I fear—"

Mary waved her hand.—"Bid him hither!—quick!" she exclaimed.—"Suspense is worse than any tidings Quick, my lord! Bid him hither without pause of idle ceremony."

Imbercourt withdrew to obey; and while Mary gazed with eager eyes upon the door, Margaret of York fixed her glance with melancholy interest on her fair step-daughter, more anxious for Mary of Burgundy—in whom she found as much affection as she could have expected from a child of her own bosom—than even for a husband, who had never greatly sought her love, and who had neglected her as soon as he found that she was destined to be childless. But a short time elapsed between the Lord of Imbercourt's departure and his return; but moments of apprehension would weigh down many long days of joy; and to Mary of Burgundy his absence seemed interminable. At length, however, he came, followed slowly by the old Lord of Neufchatel, unable, from wounds and weariness and exhaustion, to walk without the support of several attendants.

Even anxiety conquered not the gentleness of Mary's heart; and though she began to exclaim as he entered, "Well, my lord, speak!" she instantly paused, and continued, "Good God! you are sadly wounded, sir. Bring forward that chair; send for the chirurgeon of the household; sit you down, my Lord of Neufchatel! How fare you now!"

"Better than many a better man, madam," replied the old knight, more full of the disastrous tidings he bore than even of his corporeal sufferings; "many a one lies cold that could fill the saddle now-a-days far better than old Thibalt of Neufchatel."

"Good God! then what are your tidings?" cried Mary, clasping her hands. "My father?—speak, sir!—my father!"

"Is well, I hope, lady," replied the old soldier; "but as for his army—"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed the princess; "first thank God for that! But are you sure, my lord, that he is safe?"

"Nay, nay, I cannot vouch it, lady," he replied, "his army, however, is no more. Fatal, most fatal has been the duke's determination. All is lost in the field. The army of Burgundy is, as I have said, no more; and where the duke is I cannot say, though I saw him galloping towards the left when I quitted the field, which was not among the first. Ah! had he but taken my advice!" he added with a rueful shake of the head; a slight touch of natural vanity obtruding itself, even

then, in the midst of sincere grief of mind, and pain, and exhaustion of body—"Ah! had he but taken my advice, and not that of either the black traitor Campo Basso, or of Chimay, and such boys as that! But, lady, I am faint and weary, for I have ridden harder to bear you these news, though they be sad ones, and to bid you prepare all sorts of reinforcements to check the enemy, than ever I thought to ride from a field of battle."

"But tell me, my lord," said Margaret of York, stepping forward, as Mary, overwhelmed with the tidings, sat gazing mournfully in the face of the old soldier, while her mind was afar; "but tell me, my lord, how all this has happened. Speak, for I have a right to hear; and my ear, alas! has been, from the cradle, too much accustomed to the details of battle and bloodshed for my cheek to blanch or my heart to fail. Say, how went this luckless day?"

"Faith, good madam, I must be short with my tale," replied the Lord of Neufchatel, "for I know not how, but my breath fails me.—My lord the duke—God send him safe to Ghent!—had sworn by all the saints, that no house of stone should ever cover his head till he had slept in Nancy, which, as you know, we had besieged some days. The enemy, in the mean while, lay over the water a league or two beyond St. Nicholas, and day by day increased in number, while day by day the forces of the duke fell off; for we had famine and disease, and —worse than all—traitors in the camp. But his grace would not be warned, though many a one strove to warn him; and at length, on the Sunday morning, just five days since, the Swiss and Lorrainers, with their German and French allies and Italian traitors, marched boldly up towards our camp. Faith! it was a fair sight to see them come in two great bodies—one by the river, and the other by the high road from Neufville. Churls though they were, they made a gallant array. So then they came on. But, madam," he added, rising and supporting himself by the back of the chair, "I love not to think of it! Good sooth it makes my heart swell too much to tell the whole just now. We were soon hand to hand—the artillery roaring, bolts and arrows and balls flying, the trumpets braying, and the men-at-arms charging gallantly. But still, as I looked round, I saw the ranks of Burgundy wax thin; and still the Swiss

churls pushed on; and I saw many a stout soldier fall, and many that had fought well turn his back. Well, as I was thinking what might best be done, my lord the duke rode up; and speaking softly as a woman, he said, 'My good old friend, I pray you join De Lalaing, and, with your men-at-arms, make one good charge upon the flank of yonder boors.' It was soon done and over. We went down like the shot of a mangonel, but we were driven back like the same shot when it bounds off from a wall of stone. One churl shivered my helmet, and nearly split my scull with his two-handed sword Another shot me in the arm with his hand-gun. All my poor fellows but two died around me bravely; and they who were left took my horse by the bridle, and were carrying me off, when, by our Lady, I saw one of the base Italians who had betrayed us all despatching my poor Squire Walter, as he lay tumbled from his horse upon a little mound. He had served with me in nine stricken fields, and many a chance affray; he had never quitted me for more than twenty years; so I could not quit him then. No, lady, no! but, shaking the bridle from their hands that would have staid me, I turned me round, and struck one more good stroke for Burgundy. But the poor lad was dead!—God have his soul, the poor lad was dead!" and as he spoke, the old knight dashed the tear from his eye with the back of his brown hand.

"Little is there more to tell, madam," he proceeded, after a moment's pause. "By this time the battle had changed to a flight and a pursuit. There were not ten men who held together on the field. Shame to him who turns his back while one hope lasts; but no shame to him who flies from a lost field. I saw the duke galloping to the left; and as I knew the country well, I spurred for the bridge of La Buissière, and sad it was to see the road all strewed with dead and dying. But when I came near the bridge the matter was still worse; for there was that foul traitor, Campo* Basso, with a barricade of carts and wagons, cutting off the fugitives from his betrayed master's host. When I looked for-

* This fact is undoubted, and indeed the whole account of the battle of Nancy, here given, is confirmed by Jean Molinet, historiographer to Mary of Burgundy. The writer of this book, however, would have omitted this narration of events, which have been so admirably detailed elsewhere, had it not been absolutely necessary to his story.

ward, there were the Italian devils—when I looked behind, down were coming the German swine; on the one hand was the hill, with the Swiss pikes gleaming over the top, and on the other was the river. The water afforded the only chance; so in we plunged. Our horses were strong and unwounded, and we struggled through, though many a gallant gentleman sank close before our eyes. But, lady," he added, once more, as the excitement of detailing the battle passed away, "I am growing faint again, and in good sooth I have little more to tell; therefore, by your grace's leave, I will retire."

Mary answered not a word, but gazed upon the old man with the same fixed painful glance; but the duchess bowed her head, and the Lord of Neufchatel, with the aid of his two attendants, moved towards the door. Before he reached it, however, he paused, and, turning round, exclaimed, "Faith! I had forgot the very errand which made me make such haste; for I have travelled with scarcely an hour's rest, in order to bid you take instant measures to secure the country, for that wild young wolf of Lorrain will be upon the frontier speedily; and even as I passed by Brussels I heard strange tales of movements in France. You, my Lord of Imbercourt, look to it with all speed; for, believe me, not an hour is to be lost."

Thus saying, he turned and left the chamber, while Imbercourt advanced to the princess, and besought her to be comforted. She answered nothing, however; and only by a melancholy wave of the hand, expressed how deep were her apprehensions.

"Nay, Mary, my sweet child," said the duchess, "give not way to despair: remember there is a God of mercy above us, who sees all, and rules all for the best."

Mary of Burgundy cast her fair arms round her stepmother, and exclaiming, "My father! Oh, my father!" burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Leave us, my Lord of Imbercourt," said the duchess. "Let me beseech you to take all the measures necessary for our security: and send out messengers to gain more intelligence of this sad defeat. Call those whom you can best trust to council; and for God's sake suffer not your mind to be overcome at the moment that all its energies are most required."

Imbercourt bowed and withdrew: but there were cir-

cumstances in the situation of the country which rendered it impossible for him to act or think with that calm tranquillity which he had displayed at other times. A deep and heavy gloom fell over him from the first moment that the loss of the fatal battle of Nancy met his ear; and he never seemed wholly to recover his former energies.

He took care, however, to summon to the side of the princess, in her hour of need, all those who he thought might best give her both consolation and support. Messengers were instantly despatched to the Lord of Ravestein, the Duke of Cleves, the Bishop of Liege, and several others, whose relationship to the house of Burgundy afforded the best security for their taking an interest in its fate; and Imbercourt endeavoured, as far as possible, to increase the military force within the town of Ghent, without exciting the watchful jealousy of the inhabitants: but the country was totally drained of men, and few, if any, could be added at a short notice to the force within the town—at least, few of those feudal troops on which alone reliance could be placed.

In the mean while, during the evening and the early part of the night which followed the arrival of the Lord of Neufchatel, post after post came in from the side of Alost and Brussels, bringing new details and rumours of the battle; and each additional fact proved it to have been more disastrous and bloody than it had appeared at first. Nothing was heard but long lists of the dead, or exaggerated computations of the total loss. Still there was a deep silence in regard to the duke himself. No one knew what had befallen him in the fight or the pursuit; and no one ventured to assert, what all internally believed, that he had fallen upon that bloody plain. The very silence, however, was ominous; and the whole of the inmates of the ducal dwelling in Ghent passed the night in that gloomy apprehension which is perhaps more racking to the heart than absolute sorrow.

Mary wept her father as dead; but yet she insisted upon hearing the tidings that every post brought in, with that anxious eagerness which showed that a spark of hope, however faint, still remained alive within her bosom; but with her, and indeed with every one else, as fresh news arrived, as the accounts of the stern determination evinced by the duke before the battle were multiplied, and as his often reiterated declaration that he would

never quit the field alive was repeated, the conviction of his death became more and more complete.

In the mean while, the people of the city, collecting in eager and anxious crowds in the streets, especially towards the Brussels gate, canvassed in low tones the events that had taken place. As one horseman after another entered the town, still some individual would start out to accost him, and running by his side as he rode on, would gather from him whatever information he would afford, and then return to tell it to the groups, whose comments on the past were seldom unconnected with some of those whispered apprehensions for the future, which, like the low moanings of the rising wind, generally give notice of a coming storm long before it is ready to fall upon the earth.

CHAPTER XX.

It was remarked, as an extraordinary fact, that during the whole course of that evening, an evening of the greatest excitement and anxiety, perhaps, that Ghent had ever known,—not one of the principal and most influential citizens was seen in the streets of the city. The groups which collected were altogether of the lower classes; and those among them who were supposed to be the most knowing in the policy of the higher burghers could discover no other sign of interest and anxiety on their part than was afforded by the sight of one of the serving-men of Albert Maurice calling rapidly at the houses of five or six of the principal merchants, among whom the druggist Ganay was the first.

Gradually, as the evening closed in, the crowds began to disperse—a considerable number returning home early, to discuss with their wives and families the news they had collected in the town, and to acquire that degree of domestic importance which a budget of strange tidings is always sure to impart to the bearer. One after another, the diminishing groups thus separated at length—the intense cold driving even the most persevering to the shelter of their own homes as the night

advanced—and only one or two idle young men, who could boast some acquaintance with the soldiers on guard at the Brussels gate, remained after nine o'clock within the warm refuge of the guard-house, waiting for any tidings that might still arrive.

The many varied scenes, the continued presence of danger, the frequent breaking short of ties and affections, have all a natural tendency to render the heart of an old soldier in some degree callous and indifferent to events which agitate and affect younger and fresher-minded men. It was wonderful to hear with what calm composure the veterans in the guard-house talked over the events which had spread grief and dismay through the palace, and excitement and alarm in the city. Although they all loved and admired the character of Charles the Bold, for the very lion-hearted qualities which had led him to attempt impossible enterprises, and to rush upon certain defeat; yet they canvassed his conduct with calm and somewhat contemptuous examination, and spoke of his probable death in the same terms that they might be supposed to use in talking of a hound which had been gored by the boar.

"Why the devil did he set down before Nancy, in the middle of winter?" cried one; "he might have known very well that nobody would stay with him, looking at stone walls, in a frost like this."

"Ay, ay, but he did worse than that!" replied another: "why did he trust to a set of Italian hirelings, when he had good subjects of his own?"

"Why, old lions," rejoined a third, "will, they say, grow both suspicious and obstinate."

"Full time, then, that they should get their throats cut," answered the first: "but I know old Charlie well: and I will bet a flagon of Beaune to a flask of sour Rhenish, that he never left the field of Nancy. No, no; he had had enough of running away; and sure I am that he died like a stag at bay. Well, I am almost sorry that I was not with him, though a warm guard-house and a pottle-pot are better, at any time, in a frosty night, than the cold ground and a bloody night-cap. Hie thee over, Bon-temps, to the vintner's at the corner, and fill the flagon with the best thou canst get for that broad piece. By my faith! we will have a carouse to the old lion of Burgundy, be he living or dead, and then we will go sleep. Hie thee over,

while I undo the gate, for there is some one blowing his horn,—a new post from Alost, bringing more news, I warrant."

While one soldier, according to the request of the other, ran across the street to seek matter for the potations with which they proposed to conclude the night, his senior proceeded to the gate, where, the portcullis being raised, and the drawbridge let down, a cavalier immediately rode in, whom he addressed with,—"Ha! Master Prévôt; you can never have gone as far as Alost since you rode out."

"By my faith! I have though," replied Maillotin du Bac; "look at my beast,—he is steaming like a quagmire with hard riding."

"Well, what news?—what news?" cried the other; "you must have heard some tidings."

"Nothing new at all," replied the prévôt: "all is stale as a miser's cheese: a battle fought and lost; men dead, but not buried; the army dispersed, and every one gone God knows where.—Good night, good night!" and so saying, he rode on. But it is remarkable, that though his horse was evidently ready to drop with fatigue, he did not at first take his way towards his own dwelling, but directed his course towards the house of the little druggist Ganay.

In the mean time the soldiers in the guard-house discussed the contents of the flagon, with which their messenger returned; sharing it liberally with the two or three young artisans whom they had permitted to remain at their post. With what had been drunk before, the contents of the gallon pot which was now brought over was sufficient—notwithstanding the fact of its being shared with the citizens—to obfuscate, in some degree, the intellects of the soldiery; and, after having given their civil companions a somewhat unceremonious notice to go home, they cast themselves down upon the straw which was provided for their accommodation during the night, and soon forgot every thing else, under the influence of the drowsy god. The sentry without, who had been ordered to watch well, of course felt a greater inclination to sleep than ordinary, which was increased by the cold; and, in spite of various vigorous efforts to keep himself awake, by walking rapidly up and down, dropping the end of his partisan upon the ground, and several other little ex-

perimehts of the same kind, he found himself from time to time nodding most refreshingly under the shelter of the high arch which spanned over the gate.

How long this state of things had continued none of the soldiers knew, when suddenly the sentry was waked by his weapon being snatched hastily from his hands; and, on shaking off the slumber which oppressed him, he found himself pinioned by a number of powerful men, while a stern voice, backed by a naked sword at his throat, commanded him to be silent on pain of death. Faithful, in this instance at least to his duty, without a moment's consideration, the soldier shouted loudly,—"To arms! to arms!" But he was instantly thrown down and tied by those who held him, while a number of others made their way into the guard-house. The soldiers there were already upon their feet; and the captain of the watch was starting forward to light the match of his arquebuss at the lantern which hung against the wall, when a powerful man, rushing in, closed with him, and, throwing him violently back, interposed between him and the light. A dozen more persons, completely armed, poured into the building; and more than one stern voice commanded the four soldiers which it contained to lay down their arms at once.

"Who, in the fiend's name, are ye, my masters!" exclaimed the captain of the watch: "let us hear that before we put down our arms, at all events;" and while he spoke he made impatient signs to one of his companions to get out of the small window, and give the alarm: but this scheme was frustrated by the same tall, powerful figure which had before prevented him from lighting his match.

"We are the officers of the burgher guard of Ghent," replied the stranger, "whose incontestable right and privilege it has been, in all ages, to mount guard on the walls and at the gate of our own city; which privilege, though it was usurped from us by the Duke Charles, is no less valid than before that act. Give up your arms, then, quietly, and no harm shall befall you."

"Before we do that, good sir," replied the captain of the watch, "we must have authority from our superior officers. As you well know, the commander for the night is at the Ypres gate; send to him, and we will obey his commands."

"You seek, sir, to gain time," replied the other; "but

it is in vain. The walls and the gates are now in our hands. Our sentinels are mounted everywhere; and each military post which had been unlawfully placed by the Duke of Burgundy, throughout the city of Ghent, has been disarmed before we came hither. Yield, therefore, with a good grace, for yield you must; and as no blood has been shed already, pity it were to begin now."

"Well, sir!—well!" replied the captain of the watch: "you say right in that, at least; though I should be willing enough to shed blood of my own, or of other men, could it prove of service. But four can hardly cope with twenty; therefore, ground your arms, my men, and give them up. We are your prisoners, sir."

"You have done wisely, soldier," said Albert Maurice, for he it was who spoke; "take their arms, my friends, but suffer them to pass freely out. As our fellow-citizens arrive, let all the posts be doubled. Now, good Master Ganay," he added in a whisper, "gather together the men we named, and join me quickly at my house. It wants but four hours to daybreak; and ere the sun rises we have as much to do as would take lazy statesmen full many a month. I go round by the western magazine, to secure, if possible, the stores and artillery. But be quick, for *now* despatch is every thing."

The purpose of Albert Maurice was accomplished without difficulty. The magazine was but scantily guarded; and the sleeping soldiers were surprised at that post as easily as the others had been at the guard-houses. The gates, the defences, and all the principal military stations were now in the hands of the people; and Albert Maurice hastened home to meet a few individuals, selected from the most influential citizens, on whose consent, and with whose aid, he proposed to assert the ancient privileges of the city of Ghent, as the first step to those grander plans of general emancipation, which yet remained but vague and undefined even in his own mind.

So rapid had been the determination and the movements of the young citizen through all that night—so prompt and successful all his measures—that even Ganay, stirred up by revenge and hatred, and guided by consummate cunning and shrewdness, had been left far behind. Where he had expected to be obliged to urge

and suggest, he found himself at once compelled to follow and obey; and, yielding readily to a mind that he felt to be far superior, he had been hurried through a series of actions in a few hours, which he had contemplated before, indeed, but which he had contemplated as the work of many days, and long and difficult intrigues.

Between ten at night and three in the morning, the young citizen had received, from the druggist himself, the certainty of the Duke of Burgundy's death, as obtained by the prévôt, had formed his determination at once, had arranged his plans with prompt decision, had assembled the ancient burgher guard in force in his court-yard, by a few brief and striking words had explained to them his views and his schemes, had carried all voices in his favour; and, finally, had seized every military post in the town, except the palace, without bloodshed, while the regular soldiery had everywhere been surprised and disarmed.

His last effort upon the magazine, the one of the greatest importance, had been effected, as sometimes happens, with more ease than attempts that had seemed less difficult; and, leaving the citizens, who had accompanied him to guard that post, he hastened home through the solitary streets, not a little rejoiced to find, by the stillness of the whole city, that the silence and caution which had been enjoined in the first instance was still preserved. No one had arrived when he again crossed the threshold of his own door; and whispering a few hasty orders to the servant who admitted him, in regard to saddling horses, and preparing trustworthy messengers, he entered the chamber where he was about to meet his fellow-citizens, and casting himself back in a chair, covered his eyes with his hand, and abandoned himself, for a moment, to deep thought. More than one pang crossed his heart as he contemplated the future; but he smothered them instantly: and, banishing regret, he directed the whole powers of his mind to consider the best means for obtaining that object for which he had now irrevocably determined to struggle.

So deep, so intense were the thoughts to which he yielded himself, that Ganay and several others entered the apartment without his perceiving their presence; and it was only the voice of the druggist, demanding if he slept, that roused him from his revery.

"Sleep!" he exclaimed, starting up; "no, no! Who

could sleep on such a night as this? Welcome, my friends, welcome! Each sit down, I pray: others will soon be here; but it is not fitting that of the few hours which are given us for action even one minute should be wasted in waiting for any man. Some things need long counsel; in others, little can be risked. Let us choose those first that are most easily determined. Citizens of Ghent! are ye not resolved to recover the liberties and privileges which have been torn from you by the unholy hand of power?"

"We are! we are!" replied a number of stern voices around.

"Is it not requisite, then," continued Albert Maurice, "that you should call your brethren of the other good towns of Flanders and Brabant to join with and support you in asserting the rights of all?"

"Beyond all doubt! let it be done!" replied the rest.

"Well, then, by this time," added the young citizen, "four strong horses stand saddled ready to set out; and four trustworthy messengers are prepared to bear to Brussels, Ypres, Bruges, and Louvain our request that the worthy burghers of those great towns will send us deputies to give force to our proceedings. My letters, written nearly six months ago, when the battle of Morat was lost and won, have prepared them to do so at a moment's warning. The gates are now in our own hands; shall the messengers set out?"

"The sooner they depart the better!" was the universal reply; and a few lines hastily penned to each of the cities were despatched without further delay.

Before all this was completed, a number of other citizens had arrived; and the chamber was almost full. Everywhere were to be seen men with faces pale from anxiety and excitement. Some armed in hasty guise, with such armour as could be caught up in a moment; some with their night gear scarcely laid aside; and each, as he entered, gazing around upon the rest, with half wild and somewhat fearful glances, as the light of the lamps dazzled their eyes, on entering from the dark streets without. Gradually, however, as they beheld a number of friends and acquaintances all gathered together in the same cause as themselves, the boldness which men derive from union began to spread among them. Every one present had long before been prepared, in some degree, for such events as were now

taking place; and while they had been taught to look to Albert Maurice as the man from whose voice and conduct the rest of the citizens were likely to take their tone, he had taken care to ascertain the individual sentiments of each one whom he now called to consult with him, in a moment of such exigency. He well knew, indeed, that it is by no means a necessary result, that the conduct of a large body of men can be judged by the personal opinions of each. The shades of thought and character in different men are so infinite, that, when united, as in multitudes, they produce combinations which defy previous calculation: and besides that fact, there is something in the very change of position, from an isolated station to a place in a large body, which alters the characters of the persons themselves. Some, singly bold, are timid in a multitude; and some cowardly as individuals become even rash when supported by numbers.

Albert Maurice trusted to himself, however, to give the impress of his own mind to all the proceedings of the great burghers, and through them to rule the people also: but he well knew that the task before him would be to restrain rather than to excite; for never yet did a country, justly or unjustly, rise against the power that previously ruled it, without going infinitely farther than those who stirred it up originally designed.

As soon as he perceived that all whom he had called were present, the young citizen at once determined to address them, before any one else could interpose to give a wrong direction to their efforts. "Men of Ghent," he said, "may I crave your patience for a moment? Certain news has just been received by our friend and fellow-citizen here present,"—and he pointed to the druggist,—"that in this last and fatal battle, wherein he staked his country's welfare, and shed his people's blood, in an unjust quarrel, Charles Duke of Burgundy has paid the forfeit of his obstinacy and ambition with his life. Now, men of Ghent, who is there among us that does not feel that our rights have been infringed, our privileges usurped, and our liberties trampled on, by him, who has gone to give an account of all the wrongs he has so boldly committed? We all know it, and we all feel it; and there is not an artisan, however humble, in all Ghent—nay, in all Flanders—that is not preparing to take arms to vindicate the freedom of our native land

That freedom, citizens, we may look upon as secure; for never yet did a whole nation join heart and hand in asserting its liberty, but it gained its object against all opposition. But oh! my friends, let us beware—let us be cautious—let us be wise—let us be just—let us be merciful. Those who would guide a stirred-up people through a successful insurrection must be calm as well as bold, and moderate as well as zealous. The wild horses of popular excitement must be governed with a firm and a clear eye, and strong rein, or they will pass far beyond the golden goal of liberty, and rush into bloodshed, anarchy, and license. We take upon ourselves a great and an awful responsibility; and every drop of unnecessary blood that is shed in this great effort will cry loudly to Heaven for vengeance on the head of the rash men who caused or suffered it to flow. The sway of all that vast and wealthy land which lately rested in the hand of Charles, called the Bold, has now descended to a young and gentle lady, who, if her counsellors be good—"

"We will give her good counsellors!" cried some one beside him; but Albert Maurice proceeded—"Who, if her counsellors be good, will, at our petition, not only restore to us our rights and privileges, but will give us some security that they shall never be infringed again. But let us do nothing harshly. Let us proceed mildly and legally, though firmly; and first petition, as good and faithful subjects, for the redress of our wrongs, before we proceed to obtain it by our own right hands. Such moderation, my friends, will gain us the love and support of all good men—will prevent neighbouring princes from interfering while we obtain our liberty—and will at once serve best our cause, and satisfy the conscience of the most scrupulous."

"Methinks, Master Albert Maurice, you have already begun pretty boldly," said one of the more moderate of the citizens: "I hear that the gates and walls of the city have already been forcibly taken from the duke's guard, and the soldiers have been disarmed."

"That, sir, was done," replied Albert Maurice, "solely for our own security; and had it not been done, our meeting now, or our petitions hereafter, unsupported by any power of our own, would have been utterly fruitless; it was done to prevent the princess from being carried away from us before our liberties were

secure; it was done to prevent the introduction of large forces into this town before we were prepared to bid them defiance; and in doing it, we only asserted and resumed the immemorial right of the citizens of Ghent to guard their own walls and gates,—a right which had been long unjustly usurped."

"It was wisely done! It was nobly done!" cried a number of voices, in the midst of which Ganay the druggist stepped forward, and said, "Friends and fellow-citizens! all here present are bearers of high offices in the several trades, and members of the great commune of Ghent; but we are meeting without form or order. Let us resolve ourselves into a council, as a temporary government of the city; and as president thereof I here propose him whose able conduct, whose patriotic zeal, and whose prompt activity have already conducted us, thus far, with triumphant success."

A murmur of applause followed, which soon rose into a loud and unanimous assent to the proposal. Nor did Albert Maurice affect to decline an office which he had previously determined to assume. His thanks he expressed with manly eloquence, and assured his fellow-citizens, with the convincing voice of true feeling, that the liberty and prosperity of his native land should ever be the dearest wish of his heart, and the principal object of his endeavours.

As soon as this subject was discussed, an old man, one of the fathers of the city, rose up, and addressed the young citizen. With a slight touch of the monitory garrulity of old age,—at least, most of those who heard him thought it to be such,—he offered a word or two of caution to the young man who had taken upon him so bold and high a part. "He would not," he said, "urge him to be more moderate in his views, for he seemed to feel the necessity of moderation already; but he would warn him, in the course that was before him,—a course, the turns and circumstances of which none could yet tell,—to beware of his own passions—to guard against ambition, or revenge, or love: for he was young and ardent; and that heart must be either very cold or very strong which could resist the influence of some mighty passion, when under the excitement of great events."

Though Albert Maurice listened with attention, and felt more deeply than he suffered to appear the justice of the old man's speech, yet there were others who

showed some degree of impatience, and evidently thought it out of season. The old burgher perceived this feeling, and, breaking off quickly, went on with the more immediate matter before them. "It is evident, Master Albert Maurice," he said, "that you have thought over all these events long and deeply, before this night; and, indeed, who is there among us who has not so thought? What, then, is the result of your consideration? What is the first step that you advise us to take?"

"This," replied Albert Maurice,—"to meet to-morrow early, at the town-house, and there to prepare a petition, at once condoling with the princess on the events which have placed the government in her hands, and beseeching her to listen to the voice of her own heart, and spontaneously to restore to the good towns of Flanders those rights and privileges of which her father had deprived them. Especially, let us entreat her, in the first instance, to do away with that false and illegal body of men which, under her father's jurisdiction, and by his appointment, administered in this city—not justice—but the arbitrary will of the prince; and to give us back our true and legitimate magistrates, chosen by ourselves, from among ourselves, to dispense our own laws to us and to our children."

While the full mellow voice of the young citizen touched so pointedly upon those subjects on which the feelings and passions of the druggist Ganay were so highly excited, the eye of the unhappy father flashed like a living fire, and a small bright red spot gathered in the centre of his sallow cheek, while his lip quivered as if he could scarcely restrain the passion from bursting forth. The moment that Albert Maurice had done speaking, he started up from his seat, and exclaimed in a quick, sharp, discordant voice, which trembled with the very effort that he made to banish from its tones any thing like personal rancour,—"I second the proposal Are we all agreed?"

"We are," echoed the conclave.

"Now I," continued Ganay, "must offer my proposal too. Listen to me, men of Ghent. Our rights are our own—inherent—unchangeable—which the voice of no despot can wring from us—which his power may hold in abeyance, but which it can never destroy—which when even suspended, still exist in full force, and render every thing that is done in opposition to them unjust.

illegal, criminal: I therefore call upon you solemnly to arraign and to condemn those men who, chosen from ourselves by the late despot Charles, became the instruments of his tyranny against their own countrymen. The twenty-six men, falsely calling themselves magistrates of Ghent,—appointed, not by the people of Ghent, according to ancient law and usage, but by the Duke of Burgundy, contrary to all our inclinations and consent,—have, for nearly ten years, presumed to rule and judge, and doom to punishment, and shed blood, within the walls of this city; for which, as traitors, oppressors, and murderers, unjustified in their proceedings by any law or right, I claim their death, as the just punishment for their crimes, and a due warning unto others in the time to come."

As he spoke, his whole frame trembled with the angry passion that was burning at his heart. His words flowed rapidly and clear; and his bright dark eyes, flashing from beneath his heavy-knitted brow, offered the very picture of eloquent revenge. A murmur of doubtful import spread through his auditory,—some carried away by his passionate oratory—some unwilling to begin their course with such a sweeping act of severity. Albert Maurice himself,—sympathizing deeply with the feelings of the childless father, yet resolved, upon every principle of reason and right, to oppose a proposition which, he well knew, proceeded rather from the spirit of revenge than a sense of justice,—paused between his contending feelings; when, to the surprise of all, good Martin Fruse raised up his portly person, and, with one of those bursts of generous indignation, which sometimes rendered him almost eloquent, opposed himself strongly to the course suggested by his friend the druggist.

"No, no!" he exclaimed; "no, no! that will never do. Good God! my fellow-citizens, shall it be hereafter said that the people of Ghent rose up powerfully in defence of their own liberties, and made their first act the slaughter of six-and-twenty defenceless men, who had been acting under the belief that they were justified by the law! If any one was to blame, it was the Duke Charles, not they; and, good sooth, I doubt, that, at the worst, you could prove that they did not legally hold their posts; for, by my faith! we all consented that the duke should appoint them, when we thought he was

going to hang us all. A cheap bargain we thought it then, when he was at our gates with ten thousand men. But even were it not so, and had we not consented, should we be the first to make widows and orphans in our own city? Should we shed more Flemish blood, when so much has already flowed to no purpose? Should we punish men for actions in which they believed there was no offence? Fy! fy! Take from them their offices; reprove them for having so far betrayed their country as to accept the post they held from one who had no right to give it; and let them go back to their dwellings to mourn over their fall. What say you, my fair nephew? do I judge aright?"

"Most wisely, sir, as far as my poor judgment goes," replied Albert Maurice. "None would show more rigorous justice towards men who, perhaps, have been somewhat severe in the discharge of their office, than I would, but that it is clear that the citizens of Ghent formally consented to their nomination by the duke, and, therefore, that, during his life, they were acting at least under legal authority."

"But not after his death!" cried Ganay. "Charles Duke of Burgundy died on the fifth day of this month; and three days after his death my child was butchered by men whose only title to authority had ceased. The cry of blood must and shall be heard; and if it be not—"

Whatever the druggist added was muttered in so low a tone that no one distinguished its import. Albert Maurice, however, saw the necessity of conciliating him; well knowing the influence he possessed over the minds of many whose support was absolutely requisite to success in their undertaking. He now also began to experience how difficult is the task of binding into one mass a large body of men without any power over them but that which is afforded by the evanescent bubble, popularity. Revenge, ambition, avarice, vanity, pride, and every other passion common to the sons of man, he knew must ever be fertile sources of disunion in assemblies where, as in that over which he presided, each one feels that his individual adhesion is of too great consequence to the schemes of the rest for any thing to be refused him, however unreasonable his request. But he had yet to learn that the enchanter's wand, that stilled the very angry seas themselves, would wave in vain over the unbridled passions of mankind.

"Master Ganay," replied the young citizen, seeing the impression which had been made upon a great part of the burghers by the certain fact that the druggist's son had been condemned and executed after the duke's death,—"the case you mention is one totally distinct from any of the rest, and must be considered and judged of apart. Doubt not you shall have full justice done you; and the day after to-morrow we will assemble in our public hall, and solemnly debate on what course we must pursue in that respect. In the mean while, let us not embarrass our present consultations with any point on which there may be a difference of opinion; morning will soon be here. Our proceedings, then, are thus far determined:—first, to petition the princess for restoration of our rights: if she grant them, well; but if by evil counsellors she be persuaded to refuse, then to assert them with our blood and with our fortunes, till the last man among us perish! Am I right? Well then," proceeded Albert Maurice, as a ready assent followed his words, and many of the assembly rose to depart, "to-morrow, by eight in the morning, let us meet in the town-hall; and, in the mean time, friends and fellow-counsellors of the good city of Ghent, have I not your authority to provide for the guarding and safety of the town?"

"You have! you have!" was the general reply; "and now good night."

One by one the counsellors of the town of Ghent departed from the apartment of the young citizen. But Ganay, the druggist, lingered behind the rest. The conversation between him and Albert Maurice was brief and rapid, but stern and to the point.

"Albert Maurice," said the druggist, "are we still one in purpose?"

"If you so will," replied the young burgher; "but beware that you bring nothing to divide our councils."

"Nay, rather you beware that you stand not between the sword of justice and its victim," rejoined the other; "for, as I live, if you do, my love for you will become something bitterer than hate; and more than your ruin —the ruin of your cause—shall follow."

The eye of the young citizen flashed fiercely. "Mark me!" he said, grasping the arm of his companion, and bending his majestic head over him, while he fixed his full stern glance upon the sallow face of the other—

"mark me! It is time that our mutual determination should be spoken: yours has already found voice—now hearken to mine. For the service you may do to the cause that I hold dear I will give a certain way to your revenge. You see I understand you. But if you take one step beyond that, and show me that you would rule our efforts for your purposes, I will crush you or die. Man, you have met with your master! and though you may have caused the misery of lordly houses, the star of my destiny is above your scope!"

As Albert Maurice spoke, the cheek of the druggist turned even paler than before; and he answered in a subdued voice,—"Ha! indeed! We do, then, know more of each other than I thought. But this is all vain," he added, after a momentary pause; "if you know so much, you know, too, that I love you. But, Albert Maurice, I must—I will have my revenge."

"You shall have justice," replied the young citizen, "and I will not oppose you; though I think reason, and humanity, and a right construction of the law should save the unhappy men at whom you aim. The day after to-morrow, however, plead your own cause before the council in the town-hall. I will be absent; and if they judge for you, I will not interpose by word or deed."

The druggist paused, and thought for a moment. "Be it so," he said at length. "They must condemn them: and now for you, Albert Maurice. Mark me! There are two paths open before you. The one, which you seem choosing for yourself, leads to a long struggle between the people and the throne, which, after nicely balancing rights, and weighing tenderly the thousand grains of dust that constitute all questions of government and policy, shall end in nothing for the state, and your own death and ruin. The other, on which I would guide you, conducts, by a few bold strides, to power, to empire, and to *love!* You see I know you, too! Choose for yourself, and let your actions speak the result. Farewell! I will be ever by your side, to prompt you to your own advantage, even to the last moment."

Thus speaking, the druggist quitted the apartment, and followed the rest of the citizens; while Albert Maurice remained in the solitude of his own chamber, with his eyes fixed still upon the spot where Ganay had stood. "To power—to empire—to love!" he repeated, in a low tone. "How dexterously yon man knows to

mix the small portion of leaven, calculated to turn and change the whole heart of him to whom he speaks. To power—to empire—and to love!" and the young burgher cast himself in a seat, and covered his eyes with his hands, as if the very light of the lamps disturbed the intense thoughts that were working in the dark chamber of his bosom. "No!" he cried, at length, clasping his hands together; "no, no, no! My country! thou shalt be my first object; and if, in serving thee, without one effort for myself, aught of good befall me personally, I will receive it, only as a reward for working thy freedom; but never shall the thought of my individual wishes mingle with my aspirations for the benefit of my native land.—Fiend! how thou hast tempted me!"

He then gave a moment or two to other ideas connected with his situation at this moment; and the first blossom of that full harvest of regrets which every man who sows the Cadmean seeds of civil strife is destined to reap in bitterness of heart, rose up in his bosom, as he thought of the fate of the unhappy men whom he felt forced to yield to the revenge of Ganay; or to resign every hope of delivering his country. It was the first sacrifice of better feeling he had yet been obliged to make; but the first is ever the augury of many more; and Albert Maurice would fain have persuaded himself that it was not a sacrifice. He strove to prove to his own mind that the men deserved their fate. He called up instances of their severity—of their cruelty; and recapitulated to his own heart the specious sophistry of Ganay; asserting that the act they had committed—however just had been their sentence on the druggist's son—was illegal, from the previous death of him from whom alone they derived their power. He reasoned, he argued in vain—his heart was unsatisfied; when a neighbouring clock, striking the hour of five, made him start from his seat, and gladly take advantage of its warning voice, to cast away thoughts that brought regret, in the busy activity of preparing the city to hold firmly the power it had assumed.

END OF VOL. I.